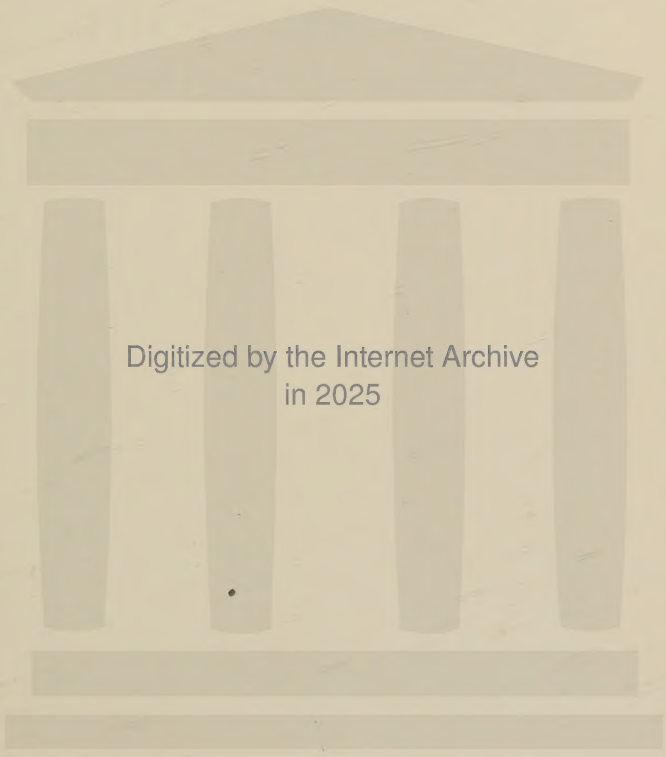
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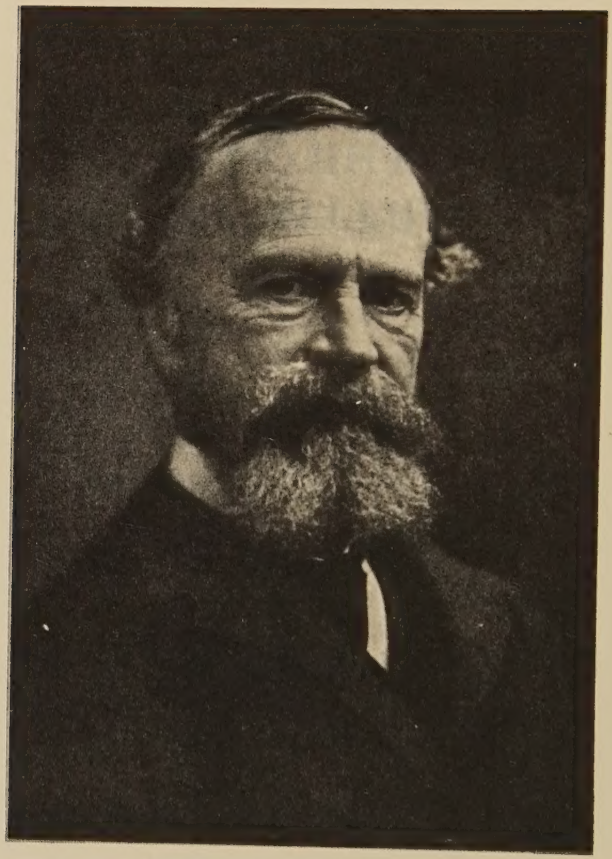
THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES



Wm James

THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES

BY

TH. FLOURNOY

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

BY

EDWIN B. HOLT AND WILLIAM JAMES, JR.

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PREFACE

In the spring of 1910 M. de Vargas, president of the *Association chrétienne suisse d'Etudiants*, conceived the idea of appealing to William James, whom he knew to be passing the summer in Europe, to address the Association at its next meeting in Sainte-Croix. The proposal might have seemed an ambitious one, but the illustrious philosopher received it very amiably and replied at once that he would be glad to come to Sainte-Croix, but must make his acceptance conditional on the state of his health when the time arrived. Unfortunately he was obliged, some weeks later, to give up the project because his health had taken a sudden turn for the worse. We now know only too well how rapidly from that time on his final illness developed. Leaving Nauheim, whither he had vainly gone for relief, James crossed Switzerland and stopped for eight days in the early part of July at Geneva; but while there he was so ill that he was able to see only a

few of his friends. He spent the following month in England, consulting the most competent specialists; then on the twelfth of August he sailed for America. He had been but a few days at his country house in Chocorua (New Hampshire) when, on the twenty-sixth of August, 1910, at the age of sixty-eight and one-half years, he died.

The two following letters from William James to M. de Vargas will give a better idea than any words of mine of the friendliness and candor of this rare man, and of the cordial feeling which he always cherished for our Switzerland.

Rye, Sussex, April 12, 1910.

Dear Monsieur de Vargas:—

Your invitation naturally fills me with pride and pleasure, and were I in good health, I should immediately accept it for the sake of renewing my old acquaintance with the *jeunesse studieuse* of Vaud and Geneva. But I am at present quite ill; and unless the course of baths which I am going to Nauheim to begin taking in May should change my condition very much indeed, it will not be possible for me, even in October (should I stay in Europe so long) to meet you and your Association at Sainte-Croix.

Nevertheless I will not say "no" at present, but will adjourn the decision until July, when I will

write to you again. So meanwhile you see that I accept your demand *en principe*. You ought, however, not to delay on that account your other possibilities of guests. . . .

I thank your Committee most cordially for doing me this honor and remain fraternally and sincerely yours,

Wm. James.

Bad-Nauheim, June 2, 1910.

Dear M. de Vargas:—

I receive your kind letter of May 28th this instant. . . . Unhappily, it will be quite impossible for me to accept. My health gets worse instead of better, and the diagnosis, now sharply *festgestellt*, of enlargement of the aorta, makes it obligatory for me to avoid every occasion of excitement and fatigue.

I deeply regret not to be able to be among you and share in Swiss enthusiasm and Swiss youth. But there is no way! Believe me, with heartiest good wishes and hopes for the success of your meeting, very sincerely yours,

Wm. James.

Thus deprived of the unparalleled good-fortune to which it had been looking forward, the *Association chrétienne d'Etudiants* requested me to take the place left vacant on its programme. Other obligations caused me to hestitate for some time; but when the dire news of James's death

arrived, I felt that I ought not to decline the invitation which, sadly enough, lay before me. It seemed a sacred duty to accept this opportunity of evoking for my young hearers the memory of the man of genius, the rare spirit, and the true friend who had been so suddenly taken from us. And hence this present discourse,[1] improvised all too hastily, on the Philosophy of William James. On revising it several months later for publication, at the instance of the Committee of the *Association*, I have become still more thoroughly aware of its incompleteness and its imperfections. Yet to correct it as I should wish would be quite beyond my present ability; and moreover, to aim here at the utmost critical precision would be to sacrifice the one merit which, perhaps, this study possesses,—namely, its unpretentiousness, its easy pace, its popular and non-academic point of view. Accordingly in preparing this volume I have preserved the arrangement and divisions, often even the none too well-turned phrases, of the original discourse. On the other hand I have enlarged it considerably

[1] Delivered at Sainte-Croix, on the eighth of October, 1910.

and perhaps too much, in order to develop certain points which were in the lecture very briefly touched on if not quite omitted. I have also reprinted, as an Appendix, my review of James's work entitled *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* This review first appeared in the *Revue Philosophique,* and may be useful, as a preliminary appreciation, to readers of that now famous work.

I could wish that this little volume, in spite of its defects, might awaken in some of my young readers the desire to become more directly acquainted with the writings of a thinker whose whole philosophy seems to appeal especially to youth, so charged is it with energy, courage, and frankness, and with buoyant devotion to those ideals which ever guided his life and conduct.

TH. FLOURNOY.

FLORISSANT, NEAR GENEVA,
June the first, 1911.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
PREFACE		iii
THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES		1
I	ARTISTIC TEMPERAMENT	3
II	EARLY ENVIRONMENT	13
III	REJECTION OF MONISM	31
IV	PRAGMATISM	44
V	RADICAL EMPIRICISM	68
VI	PLURALISM	100
VII	TYCHISM	110
VIII	MELIORISM AND MORALISM	121
IX	THEISM	134
X	THE WILL TO BELIEVE	166
XI	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	189
APPENDIX		217

Review of James's volume "The Varieties of Religious Experience."

THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES

GENTLEMEN:

It was just half a century ago—that is in the summer semester of 1860—that the Genevese Section of the *Société de Zofingue* elected to its membership a young American named William James, who was then attending the course in science and arts at our ancient University. Not many months later he withdrew, in order to return to his own country; and some years afterwards, since nothing further had been heard from him, he was entered, if you please, in the printed catalogue of former *Zofingiens*, as a "merchant" of New York.[1]

William James a merchant! A more absurd qualification could hardly have been found. For

[1] *Catalogue des Membres de la Section genevoise de la Société de Zofingen.* Genève, 1861, p. 31. It here appears that William James of New York, student of philosophy, was *hospes perpetuus* of the Section, from April 4th to July 27th, 1860, during the presidency of Aug. Chantre; and that on withdrawing he received the *honorariat.*

merchants are little addicted to cultivating pure science or delving among the riddles of the universe; and William James did nothing else. He became a philosopher, after having been so far a scientist as to have taught both anatomy and physiology at Harvard University. But he was eminently a moralist and never left out of account spiritual values. He had the warm heart and generous soul of a philanthropist, in the best sense of the word, loving humanity at large and cherishing for it the dream of a philosophy which, for once, should not stifle and hinder it, but which should help it on toward a fuller life. And he loved his fellow-men no less in the concrete, and was quick to help them in the material as well as in the moral sense. Unfortunate colleagues, disappointed and discouraged students, any derelicts whom chance threw in his path, he aided; and nobody knows how many persons he has relieved, and helped to reconcile with their lot in life. Lastly, James possessed a sensitive artistic temperament, something which, as you all know, is as remote from commerce as anything well could be.

I

ARTISTIC TEMPERAMENT

William James was an artist by virtue of an originality and perfection of literary style which made him one of the most brilliant writers of his own country. But above all he was an artist in his extraordinarily vivid and delicate feeling for concrete realities, his penetrating vision in the realm of the particular, and his aptitude for seizing on that which was characteristic and unique in everything that he met. I do not here refer to external and material realities (although it is true that James appreciated as few do the beauties of nature, and having a remarkable facility for drawing, he entertained for a time the idea of becoming a painter), for in the life of the soul he saw a still more mysterious and fascinating spectacle, and it is to the observation of this that he resolved to devote himself. He was a born psychologist and a psychologist of genius precisely because of this artistic insight, which in him, by

a rare exception, was combined with the exact scientific spirit.

Between these two turns of mind there is, as you know, a profound contrast; for the artistic mind looks at everything in its concrete particularity and presents it as individual, while the scientific intellect analyzes, abstracts, and generalizes. All science is general, as Aristotle said, and when it deals with particular objects it at once dissolves their particularity, analyzing them into elemental factors, classifying them and referring them to general laws, until all their individuality is lost. But it is just this unique individuality, intact, immediate, and real, which is the exclusive interest of art. Now James's temperament led him to see that both these points of view are indispensable to a complete knowledge of mental life, and that psychic facts must be observed in their integrity, as indivisible pulsations of the continuous " stream of consciousness " (to borrow his favorite expression); while at the same time they must be analyzed introspectively, and related to their extrinsic causes and conditions. One might reverse the familiar saying that " every landscape is a state of the soul," and say that for James

every state of the soul was a landscape, in which he perceived with the eye of an artist the color, the atmosphere, and the indefinable charm of the whole; while at the same time his scientific eye distinguished the minutest detail and divined even the geologic structure of the earth beneath. This rare combination of two so diverse perceptive faculties gave to James's psychology a quality that was both spiritual, in that the most subtle manifestations of consciousness were never violated, and at the same time searchingly physiological and even seemingly materialistic, in that the mechanical side of our psychic life, the organic and cerebral conditions, were attentively observed. But it is not of his psychology that I wish especially to speak to you to-day.

This same artistic capacity, this fineness of perception, by means of which James, in analyzing his own subjective states was able to recognize the uniqueness and irreducible individuality of each, also enabled him to penetrate the recesses of other persons' consciousnesses far better than other psychologists have ever succeeded in doing. By a kind of admirable divination he fathomed without disturbing them, minds that were very dif-

ferent from his own. Thus he was in touch with the moods and phases of the inner life of others, which to most of us are inaccessible, imprisoned as we are by the fixed barriers of our own egoism. Every work of James testifies to this aptitude, which besides being innate had been consciously exercised and developed, for seizing the living reality wheresoever it was to be found, and in persons howsoever different. So happy a faculty necessarily broadened both his personality and his philosophy far beyond the narrow individual horizon within which the devisers of philosophic systems are too often confined.

Little touches that testify to this breadth and penetration abound in James's life and in his writings. It is not only other philosophers whom he endeavors intimately to understand, but also men of a mentality quite different from his own, behind whose abstract statements he sympathetically sees, and so realizes what the immediate experience was which has inspired them. Even the most humble derelicts of our race are still of interest to him when he suspects something in them which has been sincerely lived. If in a museum, for instance, he runs across a couple

of simple souls engaged in the blissful contemplation of a mediocre canvas, instead of passing on with a smile at their naïveté, he reflects rather that at least these untutored souls are experiencing the authentic æsthetic emotion which is very often quite missed by the learned critics in whom intellectualism has dried up the springs of feeling. If he meets one of those original characters whom good society treats disdainfully as a crank, because he does not comply with accepted conventions, James instinctively feels himself attracted toward that person, not only with the curiosity of a naturalist for a rare specimen, a species which he must not miss, but with the sincere affection of a human being for his fellow-man, and with the interest of one experimenter in life for another participator in the same experiment. And we must note that in order to excite James's interest, it is not necessary for this other person's experience to present anything exceptional or sublime. However modest a human existence may be, however meagre or insipid it appears from the outside, it possesses nevertheless when seen from within its own intimate and peculiar quality, its unique importance, and a personal significance

which most of us scarcely suspect where our fellow-men are concerned, but which James always felt and endeavored to penetrate.

For instance, once when traveling in North Carolina, he passed through a desolated region where the natural forest had been ruthlessly sacrificed to make room for some miserable settlers' habitations. James reproached himself for his first feeling of revulsion at the melancholy spectacle, and blamed himself for not at once having had the sympathetic imagination to divine how much these objects, destitute as they were of beauty from the point of view of the tourist, represented for the dwellers themselves by way of toil and vicissitudes endured, and security finally won. In short here a victory had been gained over nature. However much an ugly locality may strike us with its sorry aspect when we see it merely as passers-by, it may yet be that it has a very different message for those who live there and who have toiled, suffered, and perhaps triumphed; and it is this accumulated inner significance which we ought to discern, because it is that, rather than the cheerless outward aspect of the place, which constitutes its essential reality.

James has left us in this connection two admirable lay sermons on that intellectual and spiritual blindness which prevents our seeing into the soul of our neighbor whenever the conditions of his life differ at all from our own, and which makes us stupidly insensible to all that determines his valuation of things and his deepest interests in life.[1]

James's artistic sensitiveness to all the concrete forms of psychical existence was not confined to the case of other men; it extended on occasion even to the dim consciousness of the lower animals, in whom he sought to fathom the dull pulse of psychic life, and to divine what aspect the universe wore for their confused experience. From the inquiring look of his dog, from the vague apprehensiveness of cattle being driven to the slaughter-house, from the manifestations of pain in animals on the operating table, James sought to divine the way in which the mystery of things comes home to them. The quiet and more elusive states of consciousness as well as the brute joys

[1] *Cf.* James's two essays entitled "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" and "What Makes a Life Significant?" in the latter part of his volume *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals.* New York, 1899, pp. 229 and 265.

and atrocious sufferings, which make up the existence of our humbler fellow-creatures, were all in his eyes fragments or pulsations of reality which no philosopher has any right to neglect. Even the lowly crab is summoned to the court of metaphysics by his inquiring genius, there to give its testimony in favor of the uniqueness of each individual consciousness; which in our passion for scientific generalization has been left so flagrantly out of account. "It is only a crab," says the naturalist, as he tosses it down among its fellows: "Excuse me, it is I," the animal would protest, and thus remind the philosopher that if the scientist supposes he has finally disposed of a living organism when he has pasted a label on it, or given it a place in his classification, he has quite missed the true inwardness of the situation. In reality every individual counts as itself and constitutes a unique and given fact whose existence one must recognize with a certain deference; nor may one flatter oneself that one can ever reduce it to a mere constellation of general laws or of abstract categories.

I could multiply indefinitely these little indications which show how supreme James was in dis-

cerning that which is original and unique in every creature, and in attaining a sympathetic insight into that which constitutes for each its own peculiar being. But the most typical and masterly example which he has left us of this fine comprehension of other minds that differed from his own is undoubtedly his celebrated book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.[1] This work has been a profound revelation to innumerable readers, initiating some into mysteries of the inner life which they had never even suspected, and freeing others from the heavy yoke of dogma, while it has given to all a broader outlook and a salutary lesson in toleration. There is indeed no realm in which different souls are ordinarily more completely shut off from one another than in that of religion, and no field in which the mutual lack of comprehension among human beings displays itself as more complete or more deplorable. James was the first person to succeed in pulling down these barriers, to understand and to make others understand the infinite gradations of this peculiarly intimate order of experience. He has been in this field more influential than any one else. In the midst of our modern society, so profoundly torn by religious

[1] New York, 1902.

and anti-religious hatreds, he has set in motion a current of coöperation and mutual respect, a movement for human sympathy and fraternity by which all sincere persons may feel themselves encouraged, and may, in spite of the diversity of their temperaments and personal convictions, lend friendly assistance to one another.

We are not to conclude, however, from this openness of mind and gift of sympathetic intuition which made James take an interest in every aspect of mental life, that he was one of those over-refined æsthetes for whom humanity in its infinite variety is merely an absorbing spectacle. Without doubt to know all is to pardon all. But if James pardoned all, that is to say if he was infinitely indulgent to others (so long as they on their side were not intolerant or overbearing), he none the less appreciated differences of moral quality with rare subtlety, because he was himself a positive and preëminently moral individual. He had his own ideals that were the product of his own inner experience, of his rare moral intuition, his personal view of life, in a word of his own philosophy. It is of this philosophy that I shall now try to give you a brief glimpse.

II

EARLY ENVIRONMENT

The best way to understand a philosopher is to try to trace the genesis of his ideas to those environmental influences in which they developed. We may hope that some disciple or friend of James who was acquainted with the circumstances of his life and the growth of his thought will sometime give us a detailed study of this kind. I must here confine myself merely to the broader outlines.

Two marked external influences, prior to his entrance into the philosophical career, seem to me to have impelled William James in the direction toward which his own temperament and genius already predisposed him.

The first was the influence of the home in which he grew up. It was a home in the old Puritan tradition and of unusual culture, both intellectual and moral. William's father, the revered Henry

James,[1] was a distinguished theologian and writer who, after a long intellectual search, finally adopted, with some reinterpretation, the doctrines of the great Swedish mystic, Swedenborg. He was on terms of intimacy with several of the most eminent thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic, among others with Carlyle and Emerson, whom our future philosopher thus came to know personally. The character of this theologian and mystic presented a singular combination of humor and of austerity, of sparkling wit and of profound religious seriousness, which are not without their parallels in the character of William James. There is no doubt that heredity and paternal example have counted for much in the literary style and in the temperament of the son, as well as in the fundamental inspiration of his philosophy. It is not that he has preserved intact any of the theological ideas of his father, rather the contrary; but the dominant note has remained, which is perhaps characterized best by the word *serious*.

The general impression given by William

[1] See *The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James*, edited with an introduction by William James. Boston, 1884.

James's philosophy as also by his personality is one of seriousness, of taking life seriously, and of meeting reality in a serious spirit, and if such explicit phrases are found but infrequently in his writings it is because he never assumed the tone of a preacher. And to be "serious" does not here mean, as it so often does, to be tiresome, pedantic, or morose; nor does it preclude charm, imagination, vivacity, humor, and a kindly irony. But beneath these lighter qualities there is always the intimation that this life is no idle matter, but rather a brave enterprise in which risks are to be run and difficulties surmounted.

This pervasive sentiment of the seriousness of life comes out in James explicitly in four doctrines —the liberty of man, the reality of evil, the existence of God, and the possible salvation of the world (that is to say, in the final triumph of good) by the collaboration of man with God. These are the convictions that constitute the key to James's metaphysics—to his conception of the universe. A good theology, you may say, in which there is nothing very new. Perhaps, but once you agree that life is a serious enterprise, is it possible to introduce novelty in the matter of

fundamental religious conceptions? James would have certainly said, No. And, besides, his aim was not to make a merely new and popular philosophy, but a philosophy which, built upon the rock of experience, should justify the secular convictions of common sense and the time-honored moral intuitions of our race. The originality of William James does not appear so much in his cardinal beliefs, which he took from the general current of Christian thought, as in the novel and audacious method by which he defended them against the learned philosophies of the day.

The second important influence of which I spoke, and which James met during his university course, was the illustrious zoölogist, Agassiz, under whom he studied natural science. Let me quote here a few passages from a discourse which James delivered on Agassiz fifteen years ago, at a congress of naturalists held at Harvard.[1] These passages interest us for several reasons: firstly, as

[1] W. James: "Louis Agassiz," reprinted in *Memories and Studies*. New York, 1911. (The address was delivered on the 30th of December, 1896.) Louis Agassiz, born at Orbe in 1807, was called at the age of thirty-nine to a professorship in Harvard University, where he gave a great impetus to scientific research and founded the Agassiz Museum of Comparative Zoölogy. He died there in 1873.

a public testimonial to a scientist which our own French-Switzerland may well be proud to have given to America; secondly, because we can recognize in James himself almost all those qualities which he commemorates with admiration in his old professor; and lastly, because we find very clearly shown here the main source to which he felt he owed his own method in philosophy.

Agassiz "made an impression that was unrivaled. . . . The secret of such an extraordinarily effective influence lay in the equally extraordinary mixture of the animal and social gifts, the intellectual powers, and the desires and passions of the man. From his boyhood, he looked on the world as if it and he were made for each other, and on the vast diversity of living things as if he were there with authority to take mental possession of them all. . . . His passion for knowing living things was combined with a rapidity of observation, and a capacity to recognize them again and remember everything about them, which all his life it seemed an easy triumph and delight for him to exercise, and which never allowed him to waste a moment in doubts about the commensurability of his powers with his tasks." He

was " recognized by all as one of those naturalists in the unlimited sense, one of those folio copies of mankind, like Linnæus and Cuvier, who aim at nothing less than an acquaintance with the whole of animated Nature. . . .

" He was a splendid example of the temperament that looks forward and not backward, and never wastes a moment in regrets for the irrevocable. . . .

" The secret of it all was, that while his scientific ideals were an integral part of his being, something that he never forgot or laid aside, so that wherever he went he came forward as ' the Professor,' and talked ' shop ' to every person, young or old, great or little, learned or unlearned, with whom he was thrown, he was at the same time so commanding a presence, so curious and inquiring, so responsive and expansive, and so generous and reckless of himself and of his own, that every one said immediately, ' Here is no musty *savant*, but a man, a great man, a man on the heroic scale, not to serve whom is avarice and sin. . . .

" Agassiz's influence on methods of teaching in our community was prompt and decisive—all the

more so that it struck people's imagination by its very excess. The good old way of committing printed abstractions to memory seems never to have received such a shock as it encountered at his hands. There is probably no public school teacher now in New England who will not tell you how Agassiz used to lock a student up in a room full of turtle shells, or lobster shells, or oyster shells, without a book or word to help him, and not let him out till he had discovered all the truths which the objects contained. Some found the truths after weeks and months of lonely sorrow; others never found them. Those who found them were already made into naturalists thereby —the failures were blotted from the book of honor and of life. 'Go to Nature; take the facts into your own hands; look, and see for yourself!'— These were the maxims which Agassiz preached wherever he went, and their effect on pedagogy was electric. The extreme rigor of his devotion to this concrete method of learning was the natural consequence of his own peculiar type of intellect, in which the capacity for abstraction and causal reasoning and tracing chains of consequences from hypotheses was so much less

developed than the genius for acquaintance with vast volumes of detail, and for seizing upon analogies and relations of the more proximate and concrete kind. While on the Thayer expedition, I remember that I often put questions to him about the facts of our new tropical habitat, but I doubt if he ever answered one of these questions of mine outright. He always said: 'There, you see you have a definite problem; go and look and find the answer for yourself.' His severity in this line was a living rebuke to all abstractionists and would-be biological philosophers. More than once I have heard him quote with deep feeling the lines from 'Faust':

> 'Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
> Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.'

The only man he really loved and had use for was the man who could bring him facts. To see facts, not to argue or *raisonniren*, was what life meant for him; and I think he often positively loathed the ratiocinating type of mind. 'Mr. Blank, you are *totally* uneducated!' I heard him

once say to a student who propounded to him some glittering theoretic generality. And on a similar occasion he gave an admonition that must have sunk deep into the heart of him to whom it was addressed. 'Mr. X, some people perhaps now consider you a bright young man; but when you are fifty years old, if they ever speak of you then, what they will say will be this: "That X,—oh, yes, I know him; he used to be a very bright young man!"'[1] Happy is the conceited youth who at the proper moment receives such salutary cold water therapeutics as this from one who, in other respects is a kind friend. We cannot all escape from being abstractionists. I myself, for instance, have never been able to escape; but *the hours I spent with Agassiz so taught me the difference between all possible abstractionists and all livers in the light of the world's concrete fulness, that I have never been able to forget it.*[2] Both kinds of mind have their place in the infinite design, but there can

[1] It may be added that this Mr. X. was William James himself, who had just proposed to Agassiz some Darwinian theories which had aroused his enthusiasm. The reader shall judge whether Agassiz's admonition bore good fruit.

[2] Italics not in the original.

be no question as to which kind lies the nearer to the divine type of thinking."

"Agassiz's view of Nature was saturated with simple religious feeling, and for this deep but unconventional religiosity he found at Harvard the most sympathetic possible environment. In the fifty years that have sped since he arrived here our knowledge of Nature has penetrated into joints and recesses which his vision never pierced. The causal elements and not the totals are what we are now most passionately concerned to understand; and naked and poverty-stricken enough do the stripped-out elements and forces occasionally appear to us to be. But the truth of things is after all their living fullness, and some day, from a more commanding point of view than was possible to any one in Agassiz's generation, our descendants, enriched with the spoils of all our analytic investigations, will get round again to that higher and simpler way of looking at Nature."

In place of the oyster or the tortoise shells referred to here, put some example drawn from the phenomena of consciousness; that is to say, transpose the whole passage from the domain of ex-

ternal things, with which Agassiz and the natural sciences are concerned, to the domain of internal experience, which is that of psychology and philosophy, and you will be able to apply almost textually to William James himself everything that he has just said to us about his old teacher in zoölogy. James too, we think, is one of those folio editions of our race, one of those beings of heroic type whose thought, carried away by the passion for truth, aspires to nothing less than embracing the sum total of living things and sketching in a philosophy in which all empirical data shall be taken into consideration and every human experience find its place. He was a man of infectious enthusiasm and of an expansive and generous spirit that instantly won all hearts, and one who was forever looking forward to that future which our own efforts are destined to create. Far from being one of the dazed victims of learning and scholastic tradition, he unceasingly demanded facts and for them turned his scrutiny to concrete reality, well convinced, as he says, that final truth is to be found only in the living flux of things.

To come back to the point that here concerns

us, that of the origin of the method which William James was to follow in philosophy, the passage that is italicized in the quotation given above shows us that he derived from his study of the natural sciences with Agassiz one distinction which remained forever afterward cardinal in his mind, and is indeed the dominant note through all his work even to the concluding sentences of his last lecture.[1] It is the opposition between the *abstract* way of thinking—that is, the purely logical and dialectical way so dear to philosophers, but which appeared to James paltry, hollow, and thin because too far severed from contact with particular objects—and the *concrete* way of thinking which nourishes itself on the facts of experience and which never leaves the humble

[1] *Cf. A Pluralistic Universe.* New York, 1909, pp. 330, 331. James declares himself satisfied if his lectures at Oxford have been able to impress "one point of method" on the minds of his audience; and that point is that it is high time for philosophy to abandon the arid path of intellectualism and of logical subtlety, and in imitation of the sciences to betake itself to the broad and firm foundation of particular facts. And he concludes by hoping that his young auditors, by promoting more and more the concrete methods, will arrive at philosophical conclusions actually drawn from the "particulars of life." To characterize picturesquely these two methods, James was fond of the opposed epithets "thin" and "thick."

but secure region of the tortoise shells and all the other positive data. The second method, that of Agassiz and of all scientists who are grappling with the real world, is for James the only one worth while, the only one that is really solid and "thick." He does not hesitate, you have seen, to compare it with the divine type of thinking, for it is evident that if all things are known by God or created by God, they must have been created atom by atom in every least detail and in all their immediate reality, and not by wholesale or at long range.

I need hardly tell you that in condemning abstractionism—of which he also accuses himself, with the excessive scrupulousness of all fine natures—James did not condemn abstraction, that is to say that necessary intellectual faculty for forming general ideas or concepts, without which, indeed, none of our sciences could exist, and without which our daily life would be reduced to the level of the life of animals. No one has insisted more than James himself, in various chapters and passages, on the indispensable rôle of abstraction in the formation of our thoughts. And no one has more practised it than Agassiz, of whom he

tells us that "his genius for classification was truly marvelous"; for one cannot classify without abstracting. Between abstraction (*i.e.*, conception or intellection) and abstractionism (or intellectualism) there is for James all the difference that there is between a normal function and the perversion of that function. The function of abstraction is to sum up in ideas or concepts the course of our experience in such a way as to be able to predict something of the future and to be in some degree master of it; but it is not in order to get away from that concrete future and lose it wholly from view, as do so many theoreticians who lose themselves in the clouds of speculation and no longer bear the positive realities in mind. In order to forestall any misunderstanding on this point James often uses "abstractionism" or "*vicious* intellectualism" to designate that error which consists in taking our notions or definitions, which have been legitimately derived from the facts, in an absolute and grammatical sense which these facts by no means admit of, and so deducing conclusions that are "logical" but purely illusory.

What would you say, for instance, if a con-

firmed dialectician, on the strength of the dictionary definition of "cavalier" as "a horseman," were to declare it contradictory and impossible for a cavalier ever to go on foot? Common sense would see the absurdity at once in so elementary a case, but in the more hazy atmosphere of metaphysics it is harder to see clearly, and this sort of error can be committed again and again without being detected. The celebrated sophisms by which Zeno proved the impossibility of motion, irrefutable as they are in pure logic, are of this order; and they show conclusively that the abstractionist's method, which juggles with concepts taken rigidly and absolutely, is incapable of grasping the concrete world in its fleeting and mobile reality. Yet it is in this concrete world that our daily life is unrolled and all our sciences are evolved.

In short, what instinctively irritated Agassiz the scientist, and what James the philosopher consciously rejected as a matter of principle, was not general ideas or theories as such, for nobody can dispense with these, but it was those generalizations which soar away into the void and have not, so to speak, their feet on the ground; such

theories, I mean, as are not attached to things that we can touch with our hands or see with our eyes or otherwise verify by some organ of perception; theories which fail to refer (to revert once more to our former example) to the oyster shell or the tortoise, the actual material of zoölogy, or, again, to the states of consciousness as they are immediately experienced and lived, the given data of psychology.

This point is so important for the understanding of James's philosophy that I wish to illustrate it by one more comparison. In his *Voyages en zigzag* Rodolphe Töpffer often uses the terms "speculate" and "speculation," combining the usages in philosophy and business, to designate the act of venturing on some short-cut; and he takes the opportunity to poke a sly jest at those imprudent persons who in the hope of shortening their journey march into a *cul-de-sac*. And it is clear that a "speculation" would look extremely useless and futile unless it succeeded, unless finally the short-cut emerged again on the main road. And he justly calls that a "*bad* speculation" which does not bring the traveler out at his destination. Now it is in much the same way that

James looks on theoretical speculation and its relation to concrete experience. All our ideas, hypotheses, and doctrines, in short every thing that is *thought* as opposed to that which is *sensed*, conceived as opposed to perceived, if they are to have any value or significance, must never be anything more than, as James said, a "short-cut," which leaves the broad highway of the immediately experienced facts only to rejoin it again at the goal, or at least farther along in that direction. In other words our thoughts, which form the *conceptual* domain, have no value, that is no truth, except as they advance us toward further concrete experiences and expedite our progress in the *perceptual* domain, in that surging current of events which constitutes reality. This formula, which sums up both James's pragmatism and his radical empiricism, sufficiently attests the impression made on him by his early contact with Agassiz.

To recapitulate: In so far as the personality of a genius can be explained by environmental influences, we may say that William James at the beginning of his career, had derived from the atmosphere of the parental home a moral earnest-

ness which remained the permanent inspiration of his philosophy, and from the study of natural science a concrete habit of mind which tallied excellently with his innately artistic temperament and which developed later into his two closely related doctrines of Pragmatism and Radical Empiricism.

III

REJECTION OF MONISM

Let us now picture to ourselves the young William James, student of medicine and professor of physiology, with his unquenchable thirst for knowledge turning in his leisure moments to the field of philosophy, in the hope of finding there the key to the riddles of the universe. He finds himself from the outset surveying a legion of self-assured and rather blustering pontiffs of learning, each lauding his own system as the only legitimate one, the only one conforming to all the exigencies of reason;—an intellectual Babel which might well make one's head swim. Nevertheless, upon looking more closely, one discovers that all these divergent doctrines agree in so far as to consider the infinitely complex reality that surrounds us as the manifestation of some one unique principle from which all the particular phenomena follow of inevitable necessity. These

philosophies, in other words, are all deterministic monisms which vie with one another in asserting that the whole universe constitutes, in d'Alembert's famous phrase, "one single fact and one great truth." It is only when it comes to qualifying this unique fact and supreme truth that modern metaphysicians cease to agree.

Spinoza, their common ancestor, will tell you that fundamental reality is infinite Substance, self-caused and self-sustained, from which arise, as so many particular modes and by logical necessity, all the details of our experience, including our decisions and voluntary actions; which are, consequently, no more really free than the movements of a weather-vane in a capricious wind. For his antagonist, Leibnitz, the supreme principle is God who created all beings in a pre-established harmony in which the future development of each one is ordered in advance without possible deviation, like the ticking of a well-made clock. The materialists or naturalists, with their thousand shades of difference, as in Büchner, Spencer, Haeckel, Ostwald, *et cetera*, derive the whole cosmic process either from the shock of Atoms or from the differentiation of Matter or

else from the transformation of Energy, by a rigid mechanism which nothing can escape; so that everything that happens or ever will happen was already virtually contained in the primitive nebula, and an infinite mind (according to the fiction of Laplace) could from the very beginning have calculated the sequence of events *in sæcula-sæculorum* with a mathematical certainty, merely by varying the time *t* in the universal formula. In place of the Matter or the Energy of these philosophers, Hegel and his disciples substitute its contrary, the Absolute Idea, which, however, amounts to the same thing; for it generates the whole course of things with the inexorable rigor of its dialectic, forever executing its eternal dance to the waltz-time of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Schopenhauer, in turn, explains everything by the blind and fatal impulses of the Will-to-live; and von Hartmann by those of the Unconscious. Taine invokes the universal Axiom, which professes to be the ultimate fountain-head; and Renan the Infinite Mind, which thinks all finite beings much as a novelist conceives his characters, and more or less by way of pastime. And so forth.

You see that all these different hymns in celebration of the universe have the same refrain of monism-and-determinism. In all these varieties of metaphysics, whatever may be the essence of the First Principle or the nature of the necessity which it implies—whether logical, geometrical, mechanical, physico-chemical, or even psychological, according to the idiosyncrasy of the author—there appears always the same fundamental conception, the old Oriental dogma of the One Being, the sole reality, immutable and eternal, whose empirical variety is but the delusive appearance of a temporal unrolling.

There is something ambitious and to the imagination fascinating in this idea of the absolute unity of all that exists, of the iron hand of necessity gripping the entire universe and leaving no least play to the caprice of the individual. James never disputed the majestic simplicity of what he called the "block-universe" of monistic determinism. But the æsthetic advantages of this system did not succeed in hiding from him the gravity of its consequences from a moral point of view, namely, the impossibility of still taking

life seriously when one admits that everything that it presents, including our very personalities, is nothing after all but an illusion, and has neither reality, independence, nor value. How continue to see a difference between good and bad, true and false, just and unjust, in a world in which these things are at bottom identical and lay equal claim to being a manifestation of the one unique Being from which they both originate? How have enthusiasm for the struggle and how suffer for a cause or an ideal, when we know that all our efforts will avail nothing; when that which must be must be, and what is not to be is not to be, all owing to the inexorable power which is constantly producing the future from a past which virtually contained it? What is the use of striving to behave nobly or trying to better the world, if you admit that, strictly speaking, we can never act but are merely actuated, and that the course of the world is already predetermined to all eternity in the bosom of the "primitive nebula" or of "Infinite Substance"! All existence becomes, in short, a comedy —how often, alas, a tragedy—in which we, like marionettes in the hand of the "Absolute,"

play a rôle whose action we understand only as it unfolds!

Such considerations and others of the same kind, which tend to paralyze the will and discourage effort, have certainly not escaped the attention of partisans of monistic determinism; but they are consoled either by the theoretical beauty of their doctrine, or by the serene peace inspired in them by the contemplation of an absolute necessity presiding over events and so precluding all remorse for the past and all anxiety for the future. As for William James, he was not the man to acquiesce so readily in the abandonment of our instinctive aspirations. He was by nature too active, too imbued with individualism, to consent light-heartedly to be the mere sport of Infinite Substance or of primitive nebula. Above all, his sense of the poignant reality of evil and of human suffering was too keen for him *not* to revolt against a system which justifies and definitely consecrates them as the inevitable emanations of the "Universal Being." Unquestionably, if the truth of this system were demonstrated, we should have to resign ourselves to it. But the self-assurance with which its advocates

lay claim to infallibility is scarcely a sufficient reason to make us accept their edict. Before submitting to such doctrines James asked for their confirmation, and soon learned that there was none save the personal prejudices and inclinations of their authors. For the so-called rational demonstrations upon which deterministic monism rests are, when closely examined, found to be but magnificent examples of a vicious intellectualism, because they consist in the arbitrary erection into a general dogma of the slight amount of unity and necessity that is apparent to us in the empirical world, quite regardless of the mass of empirical data which argues to the contrary. So James put aside the block-universe theory, and set himself to look for a more satisfactory conception of things.

Fortunately there have always been insurgent philosophies, which, because they lack the conceptual charm of monism, have appealed less to the great semi-cultivated masses, but have therefore often presented all the more depth and critical power. Among these James found one which was particularly congenial. This was the neo-criticism of Charles Renouvier, to which in later

years he often paid grateful tribute,[1] and of which his own philosophy is in fact a very independent offshoot transplanted to Anglo-Saxon soil, where it has gone through an autonomous and most original development. I cannot enter here into the interesting relations and dif-

[1] As early as 1881, James took occasion to make, in one of his lectures, a beautiful eulogy of Renouvier and to recommend his works (*The Will to Believe.* New York, 1897, p. 143). Later, he dedicated his magnificent work (*The Principles of Psychology.* New York, 1890) "to my dear friend François Pillon [Renouvier's collaborator], as a token of affection, and an acknowledgment of what I owe to the *Critique Philosophique.*" Lastly, his posthumous work, which has just appeared (*Some Problems of Philosophy.* New York, 1911), contains an eloquent dedication to Charles Renouvier, who ". . . was one of the greatest of philosophic characters, and but for the decisive impression made on me in the seventies by his masterly advocacy of pluralism, I might never have got free from the monistic superstition under which I had grown up. The present volume, in short, might never have been written. This is why, feeling endlessly thankful as I do, I dedicate this text-book to the great Renouvier's memory."

The *Critique Philosophique, politique, scientifique, littéraire,* which brought out most of James's early essays in French almost as soon as they had appeared in English, was a courageous review, at first a weekly and later a monthly, which was founded and conducted by Charles Renouvier (who died in 1903) with the purpose of defending the "neo-critical" point of view in every field. It was unfortunately given up in 1889, after an existence of eighteen years.

ferences between the philosophies of Renouvier and of William James. We need only note that neo-criticism is opposed to every variety of monistic determinism, and that after the manner of Kant, whose tradition he follows (changing it in certain cardinal points), Renouvier preserves in his system under the title of rational beliefs the moral postulates of human liberty, of the existence of God, and of individual immortality. You may imagine that such doctrines made an instant appeal to James's sympathies; although from a literary point of view, nothing could be in stronger contrast to his own familiar and delightful mode of expression, than Renouvier's fearfully heavy and fatiguing style. But the defects in the French philosopher's form are compensated by a power of analysis and of reasoning and by a moral fervor that were soon to gain James's adherence. The great effect which the reading of Renouvier had upon him was to bring him to a final and complete rejection of monism, which ever since that time he has strenuously opposed.[1]

[1] The two kinds of monism with which James was most occupied and which he particularly attacked, because they were the authoritative philosophies of the time, were the

I must now give you, without entering into technical or chronological detail, a sketch of the arguments and views which James evolved in the course of his philosophical career. This is not easy to do, for he has nowhere left us a systematic and complete exposition of his ideas. The last pages of his *Varieties of Religious Experience* led one to hope for a subsequent work which should be devoted to this systematic view. But owing to the duties of his professorship, other contributions to his subject, and ever-failing health, the years passed without his being able to carry out this project.

Moreover, although absolutely certain of his general design, he had a mind that was too intent on progress, too constantly in quest of new facts, too instinctively averse to anything like a fixed and final structure, in a word too intensely alive, to commit itself willingly to that kind of architectural monument which delights the professional philosopher. No one was less

evolutionary naturalism of Herbert Spencer, and pantheistic idealism, brilliantly represented on the one hand by the Hegelian or absolutist school of Oxford (Green, the Cairds, Bradley), and on the other hand by Royce and others in the United States.

likely than James to write a didactic treatise on philosophy. And when one attempts to put the very varied contents of his essays and lectures into precise and well-arranged formulæ, one runs the risk of gravely misrepresenting him. It is very much like transforming a virgin forest by laying out roads and cutting vistas through it. James is one of those personalities who by their exuberance, their great originality, and their emancipation from everything conventional affect us like one of nature's primordial forces, which cannot be readily described or summarized. It is in his works themselves—and I may say in almost any one of them—that you must look for him if you wish really to know him. His genius is so abundant, so varied, and so little preoccupied with avoiding the appearance of contradiction that in gathering in his various utterances one does not easily frame them into a truly harmonious whole. Indeed, it is almost a question whether he himself would have been able to produce a perfectly linked and coherent system from the magnificent treasure of material which he has left to us.[1]

[1] Such doubts are dispelled by James's posthumous and unfinished book (*Some Problems of Philosophy*. New York,

We do not know with certainty what title or designation he would have inscribed on the entabulature of the finished edifice. The name Pragmatism is the first to enter one's mind, and is coupled by common consent with the name of William James. But he often laid stress on the fact that this term designates a general method practised by many thinkers and capable of leading to many other systems of metaphysics than his own; so that when he refers to this latter he prefers to use various other designations. ". . . . What I want to get at, and let no interruption interfere, is (at last) my 'system' of tychistic and pluralistic 'philosophy of pure experience.'" [2] Tychism, Pluralism, Pure Experience (or its equivalent, Radical Empiricism) were, indeed, the terms of which he was particularly fond, not to mention a few other more com-

1911), which is a model of clearness and precision, and which makes us regret more than ever that he was unable to finish it.

[2] From a letter to me from Cambridge, Mass., dated April 30th, 1903. . . . The term Tychism which appears but rarely in James's principal works figures largely in the detailed program of his course ("Syllabus of Philosophy 3"), in seven pages, which he had printed for the use of his students in 1902-1903.

mon ones such as Theism and Meliorism. I imagine that of all these appellations the somewhat barbarous neologism, Tychism (from τύχη, chance), although he used it but infrequently, is the one which in the end he would have favored as best suited to express a point of view of which the chief characteristic, in opposition to most of the philosophies now in favor, is precisely the rejection of absolute determinism and the affirmation of free scope for the creative will—in other words, of chance—throughout the universe.

Be this question of denomination as it may, I shall take up successively the various captions which I have given above, and roughly indicate what James meant by each one. Such a method of exposition, desultory and unconnected as it is, will not be entirely out of keeping with the ideas of a thinker who was never in love with close-cropped symmetry or unity of the academic kind. Let us begin with Pragmatism.

IV

PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism consists in the use of a very simple rule for clearing up philosophic ideas and facilitating the discussion of them, but a rule which, by implicating a theory as to the nature and rôle of our intelligence, is found to be eminently subversive of traditional conceptions. Thus in Pragmatism are found, closely bound together, a *method* of research and a special *doctrine* concerning the human intellect.

The method, to speak of that first, may be considered as the development of that concrete manner of thinking which James appreciated so much in Agassiz. An idea or a theory had no value for Agassiz unless it could be directly applied to observable facts; could be verified, for instance, by the peculiarities in form and structure of those famous oyster or tortoise shells which his pupils were forced to study so carefully. Well, extend this idea to the whole domain

of human experience and you obtain the fundamental pragmatic rule, which is to look for the true significance and bearing of an idea, belief, or doctrine, always in the particular facts and definite consequences which it will bring forth in our experience. If the fact of adopting or rejecting an idea makes no appreciable difference to us, that idea is of no significance; one can almost say that it does not exist, that it is an empty phrase, and not even worth discussion. And if two theories, professing to be distinct or inconsistent, forecast the same result they are not really two, but one and the same idea disguised in different words. In short the essence of the pragmatic method is to avoid falling into verbiage, by testing even the most abstract philosophical and metaphysical conceptions by the results they imply at some actual future moment, and for some concrete aspect of our life.

Observe, now, that this is the very thing we instinctively do, both in ordinary life and in science, whenever we wish to avoid being blinded and misled by a beautiful theory. In order to ascertain what a theory is worth we try to imagine it at work, to see what would be the result

of its application, and we appraise it according to its purely practical consequences. Even the most complicated theories of physics or astronomy, for instance, are judged in the end by their utility in predicting eclipses or in explaining electrical phenomena, and the like. Thus pragmatism amounts simply to introducing into philosophy the scientific or experimental method which already prevails (and ever more widely) in other scientific fields, and which insists on the concrete verification of every theory. Of course in philosophy the technical procedures are not those of physics or chemistry, but the principle of verification is applicable just the same.

Following more or less in James's steps, let us take for an example, the secular aspect of the quarrel between materialism and spiritualism. Is this world the fortuitous result of atoms colliding in infinite time and space, or is there rather an Author of it all, a wise and good Being who is shaping the course of events? A serious problem this, about which much has been and still continues to be written, but one which, if treated pragmatically, comes down to this simple question:—What difference will it make, in our own

experience, if we adopt the one or the other hypothesis? It would make no difference at all, clearly, if only the past were in question, for our theories would change nothing there; the world has been what it has been, that mixture of good and evil which we know so well; and it would be, in retrospect, neither better nor worse for being either the product of atomic commotion or the work of a divine intelligence. If, then, the world were to stop at this instant, the materialistic and spiritualistic hypotheses would be absolutely equivalent, and of no distinctive import; the opposite principles they invoke having yielded, in fact, the same result. But it is very different the moment we look into the future, for these doctrines open out entirely different perspectives. Materialism, putting at the base of the universe blind and unconscious powers such as the purely mechanical forces of matter, does not permit us to hope that anything permanently good, moral, or spiritually satisfying will emerge; and in truth what the prophets of the materialistic school, Büchner, Spencer, Haeckel, and the rest would have us contemplate is the final annihilation of all conscious life following upon the

cooling-off of our planet. Spiritualism, on the contrary, putting the destinies of the universe in the hands of an intelligent and moral power, offers us the assurance that all the spiritual values that confer dignity on human life will be eternally safeguarded, and that even from the wreck of this material world God would know how to bring forth another cosmic order in which our ideals would find their realization. And thus our sufferings, efforts, and the progress humanity has made would not have gone for naught, as the theory of the materialists would have it. Thus spiritualism is a doctrine of hope, reassurance, and encouragement. And there you see the concrete difference which it introduces into the lives of its adherents, in contrast to materialism which instils but a gloomy despair.

If you object that the promises of spiritualism are dated too far ahead to interest us, James would reply that you are forgetting that human nature has never ceased to be preoccupied with the *ultimate* fate of the universe. Whether formulated or not, there is in every man some vague eschatological conception which indubitably influences his conduct and his attitude towards the

current of events. And further, the difference between the material and spiritual points of view penetrates deep into the fiber of every-day existence: the first is the negation and subversion, the second the justification and expansion of all those intimate experiences of a moral and religious sort which are the inspiration of so many human lives, and indeed of civilization at large.

The case which I have just outlined will enable you to grasp the colossal simplification—and also the change of approach—which pragmatism brings into the disputes of metaphysicians. You know full well how much argument has been raised by the controversy between spiritualism and materialism, and what a prodigious amount of dialectic has been expended by both sides in order to demonstrate or to refute the existence of the soul and of God, in order to explain how mind can govern matter or, on the contrary, how cerebral vibrations can generate consciousness, and the like. Pragmatism, at one sweep, does away with these interminable academic discussions, and presents the following question not to our reason, but to our moral

faculty: Do you care enough for your spiritual ideals to dare to believe that the very heart of the universe is interested in them also, and will provide for their ultimate realization? Or do you believe that the whole history of humanity and of its struggles towards good are merely a series of futile agitations to which the universe is perfectly indifferent and which will one day end in our utter annihilation? In the first case you are a spiritualist, in the second a materialist. But why dispute about it? Let every man take the side which seems to him more "rational," that is to say, which satisfies him best, and then live according to his conviction, leaving it to the future to decide which is right.

You see by this that pragmatism confines itself to clarifying and simplifying philosophic systems, by reducing them to their practical and concrete significance, but it does not decide between them; the final decision remains a personal matter. The pragmatic method may come out to very different conclusions according to the one who is using it; and so it has been not unjustly compared by some of its most enthusiastic par-

tisans [1] to the corridor of an hotel, that serves merely as a common passageway through which all travelers pass to go to their own special rooms where each is free to cultivate his favorite philosophy. It is, indeed, as easy for the materialist to justify his doctrine pragmatically by maintaining his preference for the ultimate suppression of all conscious being, as it is for the spiritualist pragmatically to justify his by declaring himself for that moral ideal which he hopes to see triumph.

You will consequently not be surprised that the intellectualist philosophers, accustomed to the traditional processes of argumentation, gave pragmatism a very poor welcome. They reproached it with being a disguised scepticism, a sophistical school teaching and legitimizing both the *pro* and the *con*, and containing the germ of an intellectual anarchy which justifies every man in believing what he wishes, according to his fancy or his interest. And if they were acquainted with the *Catalogue de Zofingue* they would hasten to make capital out of its misstate-

[1] The Pragmatic Club of Florence. See *Leonardo*, April, 1905, p. 47.

ment and to declare that James's pragmatism is but a tradesman's philosophy, the incarnation of that mercantile and opportunist spirit so characteristic of the Yankee race. They are horrified by the fundamental principle of the pragmatic method, that of judging ideas by their practical consequences. This looks to them like a sordid utilitarianism. They indignantly protest at the idea of submitting to the same shabby empirical treatment as we give to questions of the office or the laboratory, the most sublime problems which agitate the human mind, such as those of spiritualism and materialism, free-will, and determinism, the nature of being and of truth, of the existence of a final cause, of substance, the absolute, the unity of the universe, etc. How can you hope to reduce to concrete applications and to matter of fact those transcendental ideas which surpass all individual experience and all human caprice, and how hope in such a way to attain to the supreme truths hidden behind the chaos of empirical phenomena?

To which the pragmatists reply that it is in question, precisely, whether our intellect is qualified to attain to any such ultimate and non-con-

tingent truths, or whether its sole function is not rather to assist us in overcoming the concrete obstacles of daily life, in attaining our ends in the world in which we find ourselves.

And that is exactly the point of doctrine which is implicitly contained in the pragmatic method and which will always separate pragmatism or anti-intellectualism from intellectualism or anti-pragmatism.

The intellectualists hold the nucleus of man to be the intellect which is primary and autonomous, with its own self-contained end which is to *know*, that is, to reproduce or copy objective reality by means of ideas carefully purged of all personal and subjective elements. It is, then, the supreme and honorable duty of the scholar and philosopher to forget himself completely in his search for truth, and to discount entirely his inclinations and the necessities of his personal life. For truth must be sought in its sublime purity and with no regard to possible consequences; its meaning is hopelessly distorted and the road to it is barred in advance if we let sentiment or emotion, (even the noblest aspirations of our souls or the most urgent collective necessities) influ-

ence the direction of our thought. To all truly reasonable men Pascal's famous "reasons of the heart" are but a misnomer, and have nothing to do with *reason* properly so-called, which must ignore the promptings of the heart if it ever hopes to attain its ideal, the truth. It is surely self-evident that truth being, according to the received definition, the agreement of thought with its object, can be obtained only when thought reflects its object uninfluenced by the desires and whims of the thinker.

Quite different is the pragmatist conception of our nature. For it man is an essentially active and passionate being who strives to find and to establish himself amid exterior obstacles, a being whose abstract and rational faculty, far from being primary and an end in itself, is acquired by him in the course of his struggle for existence as an instrument which enables him to extricate himself from the difficulties in which he finds himself plunged. This amounts to saying that we do not live to think, as the intellectualists proclaim, but that we think in order to live. According to this manner of looking at things,—inspired evidently by evolutionary biology which

finds the reason for the existence of all our functions in their usefulness to life,—the ideas of our intellect are no more than ingenious means of facing the exigencies in which we find ourselves, and what we call their truth is neither more nor less than their efficacy. An idea is true or false according as it does or does not answer to the needs which gave it birth, according as it fits or does not fit the design for which we have shaped it, as it leads or does not lead to the desired results. In other words the truth of any idea or theory is always relative to certain special *desiderata*, and is measured by actual utility, the way in which it aids us amid the perplexities which have caused us to resort to it.[1] To put it in still another way, the sole criterion of truth

[1] "Man is the measure of all things," said Protagoras. This deeply pragmatic point of view which rationalists have sought to discredit by treating it as the height of scepticism, has been revived in our day and brilliantly defended by F. C. S. Schiller of Oxford, in *Humanism* (London, 1903). Also the pragmatic conception of the essentially instrumental, functional, and teleological value of all our ideas and mental operations dominates the reform of logic and of the theory of knowledge undertaken by J. Dewey and his school (see *Studies in Logical Theory*. Chicago, 1903). Schiller and Dewey are, with James, the preëminent champions of pragmatism who,

is the satisfaction which it brings us when applied to the solution of vexatious problems, and to the re-establishing of our equilibrium and harmony of mind.

In support of this doctrine pragmatists cite the example of scientific ideas and the notions of common sense. As for these latter, such as the belief in the independent and permanent existence of material objects, in the consciousness of our fellow-men, in the ordinary causal connections, and the like, it is evident that since they cannot be demonstrated by any logical necessity they must originally have been pure hypotheses, attempts at the interpretation of immediate experience, and it is evident that they have become fixed by reason of their success and their utility, while many other tentative hypotheses have not survived.

For an instance: the infant who drops his rattle no longer thinks about it; he has not yet acquired the idea that objects continue to exist when they are no longer perceived. This idea

while they manifest slightly different tendencies, are all agreed as to its fundamental principles. Dewey has also set forth a doctrine of immediate experience or "immediatism" closely allied to James's radical empiricism.

must have dawned, one fine day, on the animal world under the pressure of need, and become gradually established by virtue of its fruitful consequences in causing things lost sight of to be searched for and found; for in and of itself, and in so far as pure thought is concerned, the continued existence of an unperceived object is quite as *unlogical*, mysterious, and incomprehensible as would be its repeated creation and annihilation. In the same way, if we believe in the mental life of our fellow-men instead of considering them as unconscious machines (as Descartes conceived animals, and as learned physiologists have considered man himself), it is not because we are able to demonstrate this mental life logically, but because its rejection would deprive us of constant emotional satisfactions. Imagine the interest, James somewhere said, that your *fiancée* would inspire in you if you knew her to be an automaton, a mere mechanical doll, responding to your voice with every mark of tenderness but feeling no inner emotion.

As for our scientific ideas and theories, you are well aware that an entirely pragmatic conception of their value and truth had already de-

veloped among natural scientists long before the birth of pragmatism in philosophy. Molecules and atoms, ions, and electrons, ether and its vibrations, ideas of genus and species, the principles of inertia and of the conservation of energy, and in fact all natural laws are the creations of our mind in its effort to orient itself amid the chaos of facts, to understand or "explain" and to foretell the facts of sensible experience. They are not absolute truths or the adequate expression of objective realities, as intellectualism would have them be, but convenient hypotheses, useful postulates, tools, which are effective in manipulating phenomena. Such, in fact, are all of the fundamental theories and conceptions which science uses; their value and significance reside in their concrete results, in their power to transform the perceptual chaos into a world of order and harmony which satisfies our intellect. And often this aim of ours is as yet far from being realized; there have been many "truths" that were long held to be incontestable, such as the indestructibility of atoms, which have had to be revised because they no longer squared with the facts.

If science and common sense have always proceeded in this manner,—I mean by incessantly testing, and so groping towards hypotheses which satisfactorily cover the concrete data of experience,—why should philosophy do otherwise and cling to hollow abstractions and "absolute principles" which have no direct contact with empirical realities? Philosophy differs, it is true, from the other disciplines in that because it aims at a *total* conception of the universe and of life it cannot rest content with meeting this or that *particular* need of our mind. But this does not excuse it from meeting at least these needs, and it is difficult to see what the criterion of the definitive philosophy (the philosophy which every one will accept) should be unless it be the full and complete satisfaction of *all* our needs. Certes, we are far from having attained this ideal, and do not know whether it will ever be attained. But at all events the way to approach it is not in advance to forbid philosophy, as do the intellectualists, to take into consideration the demands of the emotional and practical sides of our being!

We cannot expect the pragmatists and intellectualists to come to an early agreement, for

their opposite ways of looking at the nature and rôle of our intellect are doubtless symptoms of profound differences of temperament and mentality.[1] I leave this problem for your meditation. But before taking up another subject I ought to add that although James was for twelve years the most illustrious representative of the pragmatic method, he was not the inventor of it and has never professed to be. He assigned the credit for this to his friend and fellow-countryman, Charles Peirce, a scientist and philosopher who is far too little known and whose principal work on the subject with which we are dealing passed almost unnoticed until, twenty years later, James rescued it from obscurity and made it famous.[2]

[1] See, however, P. Bovet's conciliatory essay: *La Définition pragmatique de la vérité.* St.-Blaise, 1910, p. 37.

[2] Peirce's article appeared in the *Popular Science Monthly* of January, 1878, and was translated into French the following year. He shows that all beliefs are but rules of action: "the whole function of thought is to produce habits of action . . . whatever there is connected with a thought, but irrelevant to its purpose [it may be something distracting or amusing], is an accretion to it, but no part of it. . . . To develop its meaning, we have, therefore, simply to determine what habits it produces, for what a thing means is simply what habits it involves. . . . Our idea of

It was, indeed, from Peirce that James took the name and fundamental proposition of pragmatism, but he had already found the spirit of it more or less implied in many earlier philosophers, notably so in the English empiricists, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and especially John Stuart Mill. In view of this he called his book on this subject *Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking.*[1] The word itself (used in a somewhat different sense) and the essentially pragmatic principle are to be found also in Kant, who in affirming the "priority of the practical (moral) Reason over the theoretical Reason" in matters of belief, gave one of the

anything *is* our idea of its sensible effects." The rule for making our ideas clear is, then, to "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." But it was not until 1898 that pragmatism really came to public notice through James's far-famed lecture at the University of California, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results."

[1] *Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking. Popular Lectures on Philosophy by William James.* New York, 1907. The work is dedicated "To the memory of John Stuart Mill from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind, and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive to-day."

simplest and clearest definitions of the pragmatic attitude.[1] And if the essentials of this attitude consist in subordinating the intellect to the moral faculties and in making the former merely an auxiliary to volition and feeling (an indispensable one, to be sure, but still an auxiliary) it is evident that pragmatism has always figured prominently:—as much so, perhaps, as the opposite tendency which makes the intelligence the chief of our faculties and very nearly the entire man. With us, in particular, it has always been

[1] If James does not cite Kant among his intellectual predecessors, it is because he seems never quite to have appreciated the philosopher of Königsberg, whose crabbed dryness, pedantry, and scholastic pomposity were repellent to his artistic nature, and aroused his irony. While he doubtless respected the old sage's moral rectitude, he nevertheless delighted to brand his system of philosophy with terms as picturesque as they were irreverent—"musty academicism," "the Kantian curiosity-shop," etc. . . . James held that Kant brought to philosophy no single indispensable idea which it did not possess already or which it was not sooner or later to acquire by the natural development of English empiricism, and that the great line of progress of modern thought should not be drawn through Kant, but should go around him as around an obstacle. It is true that no one person is indispensable to philosophy any more than to anything else; and yet, aside from other considerations, without Kant should we have had Renouvier, and without Renouvier should we have had the James whom we so love and admire?

in the air. All our Latin-Swiss thinkers were more or less pragmatists without knowing it; I mean without suspecting that their way of thinking was one day to be erected into a precise method bearing a name. For in their case it was quite consciously and intentionally that they chose their moral instincts, rather than pure logic, as guides in their philosophic speculation. A distinguished writer, Albert Schinz, anti-pragmatic to the marrow, although he too is a Swiss (there is no rule without its exceptions), has recently pointed out that Rousseau was one of James's most unmistakable precursors on the road to pragmatism.[1] One might add here also

[1] Albert Schinz: *"Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Forerunner of Pragmatism."* Chicago, 1909 (39 pp.). Mr. Schinz is a professor at Bryn Mawr College. We are indebted to him for some spicy articles on intellectual and social movements in the United States, and a volume which is a searching polemic against pragmatism, *Anti-Pragmatisme examen de droits respectifs de l'aristocratie intellectuelle, et de la démocratie sociale.* Paris, 1909 (309 pp.). According to him, pragmatism is for the masses and for sentimental minds which are solicitous for the happiness of humanity, but it has nothing to do with true philosophy which is a purely intellectual, objective, and impersonal study for which the intellectual *élite* alone is fitted; and he tries to show that the present pragmatist movement is merely the result and expression of the needs, tendencies, and condi-

Vinet, Ch. Secrétan, Aug. Bouvier, Ern. Naville, and G. Frommel who, despite their often offensively intellectualistic methods of argument, all believed that man must proceed toward truth not by the aid of his intellect alone, but with the help of all the powers of his soul. (I do not speak of Amiel for in his fluid and polymorphous nature one can find a hint of everything.) And as to the two thinkers whose recent loss is so lamented by the University of Geneva, we can easily discover the pragmatist thread running through the philosophy of J. J. Gourd and the theology of Ernest Martin. What more significant in this connection than such observations as the following, which occur in even the earliest manuscripts of Martin, and in which we seem to find those ideas anticipated which James was to promulgate more widely some years later:

tions of existence in American society of the present day. This book is interesting even to those who in no sense share the views of its author. It contains much that is true and some remarkable pages which clearly reveal the chasm which separates the intellectualist from the pragmatist temperament. It is to be regretted that James did not see fit, or did not have time, to reply to this animated criticism, which he referred to as an "amusing sociological romance."

(1877) "There is something higher than intellect and that is life, of which the intellect is but one function. . . . The intellect cannot emancipate itself from that which supports it, and which it is bound to serve. . . . We are made to act rather than to think. We think and we must think, but our thought must be subordinated to our life, of which it is a function. . . . Every function has its proper place, which it must keep: thought steps out of its place when it says:—I propose to exercise myself quite independently of the organism of which I form a part. And this is also what it is doing when it essays to give an account of what *is*, before allowing the senses and the will to play their part. . . ."

(1878) "Every man tends, when he thinks or reflects, to take cognizance only of what can be formulated in a clear-cut thought; yet how many realities there are in life which it is impossible to reduce to a familiar phrase or even to a formal proposition. . . . Only that which is clear and definite exists for science; whereas in life there are quantities of things which are neither clear nor definite, and which have carefully to be taken into account lest we come to grief. . . . Any goal assigned to life is narrow and inadequate if it is other than life itself—life full, harmonious and complete. And life is not an idea, it is an act."

(1886) "All the great philosophical problems which agitate the minds of men are but parts of the sovereign problem of life; this problem is unsolved; we are in the act of solving it, each for him-

self, every day, by our voluntary choices. The philosophical solutions are always more or less directly dependent upon this primary practical solution. . . ."

As for Gourd, under the cover of an extremely abstract dialectic, which would have been little to James's taste, he has left us a very original system of philosophy founded entirely on a broadly applied principle of value (the emancipation of the spirit), which is pure pragmatism and which carries with it, in spite of differences in terminology and notwithstanding its entirely independent origin, important points of contact between his system and that of James.

We are, on the whole, a race of born pragmatists: we are anti-intellectualistic by instinct, and our sympathy is assured in advance to any philosophy such as James's. This is to be explained by the fact that there are certainly deep and subtle affinities between the great currents of philosophic thought and those of a political, social and religious order. James himself remarked, on several occasions, that his conception of things squared with liberty, exact science, democracy, and protestantism. By putting the accent, he

said, on concrete realities, particular things, the individual, and precise consequences (instead of on abstractions, general ideas, and broad impersonal principles) pragmatism overturns the "throne of authority," so to speak, in the same sense as did the religious reformation. And just as the papist mind often sees nothing but anarchy and disorder in protestantism, in like manner, to deeply intellectualist minds pragmatism must appear to be a philosophy of pure confusion. Nevertheless, he concluded, the protestant countries have continued to exist, flourish, and develop, and it is fair to predict the same of this philosophic protestantism, Pragmatism.

V

RADICAL EMPIRICISM

Let us now leave Pragmatism, which is compatible with many different systems, to take up the particular conceptions and more personal views with which it was associated in William James's mind. And at the outset let us place ourselves at the heart of this thinker's philosophy, at the very center from which the roads radiate in all directions. I refer to his Radical Empiricism or the doctrine of pure experience.

In order to grasp fully its originality, one must remember that in all ages philosophers have been divided between two opposing tendencies, rationalism and empiricism, according as they instinctively depended when seeking to discover reality, upon the mere use of reason or upon information derived from experience (external or internal), upon ideas or upon facts, upon the "conceptual" or upon the "perceptual." We have seen that from the first James adhered to

the second tendency, which is almost a racial heritage among Anglo-Saxon thinkers. But he believed that his predecessors had not known how to push their method to its conclusion, and that instead of deriving all that it was capable of yielding they had often forsaken it and fallen, like the rationalists, into the toils of vicious abstractionism. As against these inconsistent or short-winded empiricists, as well as against all rationalists, James presents his Radical Empiricism which makes reality coincide unqualifiedly with experience, and experience with reality. "All that is experienced is real, and all that is real is experienced:" such is the formula in which James might have summarized his doctrine had it not been for his aversion to propositions which seem to be dogmatic or absolute; and in so doing he would have excellently defined his empiricist position as in direct contrast with that Hegelian top notch of rationalism: "All that is rational is real, and all that is real is rational."

Let us survey briefly James's attitude in some of the principal branches of philosophy, that we may understand just how his empiricism goes further than that of his predecessors and so de-

serves the epithet *radical*, which he expressly prefixed to it.[1]

I. First of all, in psychology, the most resolute empiricists, like Hume and John Stuart Mill, after having reduced our mental life introspectively to its elementary data (sensations of all sorts), have concluded from the fact of their *distinctness* for analysis that these elements are in reality originally *separate*, and have then found themselves unable to reconstruct the unity of our consciousness out of the dust of these isolated elements.[2] Thus they fell victim to their rationalist adversaries who have always declared the mysterious unity of the "Ego" to be inexplicable save by a special metaphysical principle (the Soul, Monad, Spiritual Substance, transcen-

[1] The reader who is dismayed by the somewhat arid and abstruse character of the following paragraphs, has but to skip them and go directly to *Pluralism*, p. 100.

[2] "For my part," said Hume, "I must plead the privilege of a skeptic, and confess that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding" (*Treatise on Human Nature*, Book I, Appendix). And John Stuart Mill declared it "inexplicable" and "incomprehensible" that a succession of separate states of consciousness can take cognizance of itself, as a succession, in a new present state of consciousness. (*Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, Chapter XII).

dental Apperception, etc.) adduced for the purpose of affecting the synthesis of this empirical multiplicity.

To this William James replies that the "Soul" is a doubly useless hypothesis. First of all it is only a word substituted for an explanation, for if our consciousness were really composed of separate elements, one fails to see how one element more, a metaphysical entity beyond the field of direct observation, could succeed in reuniting them; the mystery is not to be solved by supposing behind the scenes a *deus ex machina* that shall somehow achieve the incomprehensible. But in the second place, more especially, the soul is superfluous because the dilemma for which it was invented does not exist; it is not true that our psychic life is made up of a multiplicity of elements, each having its independent existence, which have to be reunited; for what actual experience presents is a multiplicity originally given *as one* act or *one* field of consciousness. The unity here is just as primitive as the multiplicity, and requires no more explanation than does the latter; the fact is sufficient. The one which is many, or the many which are one, is the plain

empirical fact. In other words, it is altering the nature of reality to compare our consciousness, as does the whole empiricist school, to an aggregate, a mosaic of juxtaposed elements, as if to something like a cloud of dust or a shower of sparks. A simile which would better correspond to actual observation would be that of a continuous current, a stream in which the ripples succeed one another and pass continuously one into another without break. It is our abstract conceptual thought that, agreeably to its own disjunctive procedure, isolates and arbitrarily fixes certain portions of this stream of consciousness, taking no account of their real and continuous movement; just as instantaneous photography catches a galloping horse or a flying express-train and reports it in a motionless image on paper. But such an image is neither the train nor the horse, and the speed and power which in reality these possessed have all been lost. Such is the difference between our mental life as it is actually lived and this life as it is pictured in our descriptions and logical analyses.

For example, we conceive the present as a mathematical point or the blade of a knife, divid-

ing the past which is no longer from the future which is not yet. But in the given reality these three things melt into one another without the least separation; every moment of our immediate experience is a becoming, a duration, which unites in an indivisible whole the future already dawning on the present and the present already moving into the past. Language with its separate words and logic with its static ideas are powerless to give a just account of this fluid, mobile reality, which to be rightly apprehended must be actually lived. Even in the cases where there appears to us to be a sudden break in continuity, resulting in the clear juxtaposition of two distinct states,—as when an unexpected explosion breaks in on silence,—if we observe carefully, we perceive that the first state continues into the second without, strictly speaking, any separation; and if we wish to describe the experience accurately we must admit that it was not the perception of an explosion but the perception-of-an-explosion-which-broke-the-silence. For the sense or the recollection of the preceding silence continues as an integral part of the perception of the noise.

To sum up, although every moment of our life, every pulsation of consciousness has for us a multiple content, a complexity of aspects or objects each of which our thought takes note of, and is so able to abstract it from the rest, this does not signify that such a moment of consciousness has been compounded from a collection of fragments whose synthesis must now be accounted for. Nor does it signify that our whole life is a series of separate moments which have to be strung together like the beads of a necklace upon a hidden metaphysical thread. In fact the continuity and unity of our consciousness or personality are immediately experienced, and are by this same token real. By carefully noting and describing this unity, James's radical empiricism guards against either losing sight of it, as does ordinary empiricism, or having to go for a so-called explanation of it to principles that are beyond the pale of experience, as does rationalism.

II. In epistemology (or the theory of knowledge) James's philosophy takes the same middle course between the two traditional extremes.

You know that in every cognitive act analysis

discovers two factors, on the one hand the intuitions of sense or the data of perception, and on the other the intellectual elements which serve to bind the sense-intuitions together, such as the concepts of identity, resemblance, difference, space and time, quantity and quality, causality, finality, possibility, necessity, reality, and in short all the ideas of relation which are, so to speak, the skeleton of our thought, and the logical scaffolding of our scientific and philosophical edifices. Now empiricists have always been much embarrassed by these intellectual factors, for which they are unable to find a satisfactory origin among the sense-data; and so these factors straightway furnish the rationalists with an excuse for alleging that they are principles which utterly transcend experience. These are the rationalists' so-called innate ideas, *a priori* concepts, categories of the understanding, synthetic acts of pure reason, and so forth. Here again James takes his stand on introspective psychology and asserts that as a fact the relationships which our thought conceives as obtaining *between* the brute facts of sense, are themselves found just as much in immedi-

ate experience as are the brute facts![1] The result is that the famous categories of the mind, which have always been the corner-stone of rationalism and the stumbling-block of classical empiricism, cease to exist for radical empiricism. For however transcendent and purely rational these concepts may appear to the superficial observation of the logicians, any careful psychologist can easily ascertain that they are wholly drawn from the facts of experience, and that their concrete reality is as undeniable as that of any other fact of experience. The truth is that our inner life is far richer, more varied and profound than most philosophers, whether empiricist or rationalist, have realized, and that when attentively examined it is found to contain a host of original experiences which have escaped the observation of both the one and the other.

[1] James does not mean to imply that in each particular case the true relationships are necessarily perceived, for we should then be infallible; and should never be guilty, for example, of the famous sophism *post hoc ergo propter hoc* which often leads us to admit a bond of causality where there is actually nothing but a chance succession. We are naturally subject to error and our experience must ceaselessly correct itself by extension and development; thus engendering science. What James means is that although we may be often deceived in experiencing these

This discovery, James's great contribution to psychology, constitutes the basis of his radical empiricism, both in metaphysics and epistemology. Before his time, phenomena were looked upon as sense-impressions only if their stability, and persistence in memory and imagination were sufficiently striking to attract the vulgar attention and to receive a name in the language,—such as red, cold, hard, mountain, table, joy, anger, and the like. And even in language there are many words, such as prepositions and conjunctions, which no one would have supposed to refer to a concretely felt or perceived entity; these are not, it was thought, facts of experience strictly speaking, but simply logical relations. Such words are *but, if, and, because, on condition that, then, for, neither, etc.* William James, in his celebrated essay "On Some Omissions of Intro-

ideas of relation, nevertheless these ideas have their origin somehow in the immediate experience itself. For instance, our idea of causal connection is drawn from the undeniable experience of personal activity, yet we may still be in error when in special cases we seem to experience causality; just as when in a railway station we think that our own train is in motion while in reality it is the neighboring train, our illusion consists not in our belief in motion, which is perfectly real, but in our false localization of it.

spective Psychology," [1] was the first to call attention to the fact that these words, however empty they may appear in themselves, are not without sensory content, and that each one of them, pronounced by itself, throws us into a mental attitude, an expectancy, sometimes almost an emotion, which is perfectly positive and distinct. Thus a definite sentiment is aroused by *but*, by *if*, by *where*, etc.,—a sentiment which, though fleeting and unanalyzable, a mere transitive state between ideas where the mind as it were alights, is still as concretely precise, and actually *experienced* as are the most pronounced "substantive states" (sensations, perceptions, images, and memories). It is true that in ordinary life we are too much absorbed by these latter, on account of their practical importance and their relative permanence, to notice the "transitive states" which bind them together, and which are "always on the wing, so to speak, and not to be glimpsed except in flight." But just as the flight, in spite of its rapidity, is as much a fact as is the position of rest, so the quasi-instantaneousness of our passage from one mental state to an-

[1] *Mind*, 1884, Vol. IX, pp. 1-26.

other as we pronounce or hear pronounced the little connecting words in the course of a phrase, must not deceive us as to the positive and immediate reality of that experience of passage.

What I have just said in regard to those portions of consciousness which correspond to prepositions and conjunctions is only an illustration of these transitive states, which were entirely neglected until James established their full right to be recognized as psychic realities on a par with the substantive states. He adduces many other examples, which show us that these transitive states constitute the very threads of our life. They are those feelings of tendency, significance, intention, intellectual and moral attitude, those inner movements of all sorts which we so persistently name after the goals towards which they aim, that finally we come to notice only the latter and to lose sight of the equally real transitive process which leads up to them. If one applies oneself, as James did, and as contemporary psychology is doing more and more, to a consideration of these fleeting elements in our mental life, it becomes evident that the domain of what is directly experienced and lived extends far be-

yond the gross sensations which were all that had struck earlier observers.[1] In the end this realm is found to be so far-reaching as to include everything, even the mental categories, so that in this continuous network constituted by the data of actual experience, there remains no gap through which to introduce elements of another order, such as the *a priori* principles of the rationalists.

III. There remains, however, one cardinal epistemological concept which seems to be exceptional in that it apparently cannot be traced back to experience, namely the idea of "truth," or the relation of consciousness to its object. Is it not, after all, the very essence of all consciousness that it has an object, that it points to something outside of and other than itself; and is it not evident that such a relation as that, the cognitive or noetic relation, is of a purely conceptual nature, quite foreign and irreducible to given facts of perceptual experience? These latter simply *are*, but do not aim at anything outside themselves. Are not the function of knowing

[1] See, for instance, P. Bovet: *L'Etude expérimentale du Jugement et de la Pensée. Archives de Psychologie,* 1908, t. VIII, pp. 9-48.

and the idea of truth which is implied by it sufficient squarely to refute radical empiricism? This question occupied James a great deal. He studied it from every side and wrote a number of articles (afterwards collected in a book [1]) whose object was to replace the intellectualist conception of truth, which he felt to be mere verbiage, by his own pragmatic conception, which is the only one that squares with the facts and with radical empiricism. Since this subject is somewhat intricate I shall try to illustrate James's idea by an elementary example.

While occupied at my desk I hear a noise outside the door and recognize the voice of my friend, Paul. Wherein consists the truth of my reflection, "That is Paul"? The truth of this thought evidently lies in its conformity with its object, that is to say with the fact that it is indeed Paul, and no one else, who is in the vestibule. Unquestionably, replies the pragmatist, but what exactly does this vague word *conformity* (or its equivalents—correspondence, agreement, etc.) imply in this particular case?

[1] *The Meaning of Truth, a Sequel to Pragmatism.* New York, 1909.

In this case, many of you would doubtless answer, it signifies that if I should open the door I should actually find Paul; in other words I should see him, shake hands with him, speak to him, and thus directly ascertain that I had not been mistaken in thinking that I recognized his voice. Exactly so, James would reply. Your sound common sense leads you straight to the pragmatic definition of truth and, by the same token, to the verification of radical empiricism. The *truth* of my belief in Paul's presence lies in its verification by a series of concrete and immediate experiences: having heard Paul's voice I have risen from my chair, gone to the door of my room, opened it, entered the hall, seen, and fully verified the presence of my friend, Paul. In other words my initial experience (the hearing of Paul's voice) has led me, through a series of other clearly defined experiences, to my final experience which is the fulfilment of what the first one predicted.[1] And you clearly perceive that all this is but a succession of experiences, bound

[1] For the sake of brevity I do not consider the case in which verification is completely followed out, and I omit James's theory of the conceptual *substitutes* for possible experience, with which we are so often satisfied.

together by transitions that are equally experienced, and that nowhere are we dealing with any so-called purely conceptual relation between mind and a transcendent object.

But here the intellectualists will object:—You have just made the most unpardonable blunder, putting the cart before the horse and mistaking the effect for the cause. In point of fact it is not because your idea that Paul was outside was verified that it was true, but it is only because it was true that you were able to verify it. As for asking in what its truth, its conformity with its object, consists in *the particular case* that is simply a misconception; particular cases differ according to the nature of the thoughts and of their objects, but not in the relation that unites the one to the other, for it goes without saying that this relation—from the moment that it is what it should be, namely, truth and not error—is always the same, is universal, eternal, unique, and undefinable. It is, namely, the original relation called Truth! That truth is prior to all verification, and that it constitutes the inalienable essence of every "true" proposition is self-evident, and must simply be acknowledged. What

proof can you wish? Of the pair of contradictories, "Mars is inhabited" and "Mars is uninhabited," we are taught by logic that one is necessarily true, the other false; and though it is doubtless to be regretted that we do not know which is true, that does not alter the case; the one that is true is so in and of itself, independently of any verification. And one may say that it always has been and always will be true. For even if the state of Mars were to change, that would in no way influence the eternal truth of the proposition expressing what it had been previous to that change. It is not even necessary that a proposition should be *thought* for it to be true; do you not know that among all the possible pairs of contradictory propositions, even among those which have never entered any one's mind and which perhaps never will, there is necessarily one of each pair that is true? And have not the scholastics already framed the concept of an Absolute Truth which comprises all these true propositions, and of which the partial truths that we discover are but the tiniest crumbs?

But the protestations of intellectualism do not mislead James. He sees but a verbal, abstrac-

tionist's chimera in this Platonic theory which makes of "Truth" a sort of intermediate realm, prior to all human consciousness and hovering like some impalpable cloud between reality on the one hand and thought on the other. In his eyes these last two alone exist (both made, for that matter, of the same stuff—experience), and the term *truth* does not express any transcendent and indefinable relation to some sphere independent of ourselves, but it designates a particular relation, which always exists concretely, between the different portions of our experience itself. A state of consciousness, a bit of experience (such as hearing Paul's voice), is in itself neither true nor false; it *is*, merely, and bears the immediate evidence of its reality. But whether this initial state terminates through a series of concrete intermediaries (rising, going into the hall) in a new experience (the actual seeing of Paul) which is felt to be the continuation, development, and full confirmation of the first one; or whether, on the contrary, it terminates in a contradiction (finding myself in the presence of a stranger whose voice I had mistaken for Paul's):—it is in either case judged true or false retrospectively

on the ground of an actual experience which of itself is in turn neither true nor false, but *is* what *it* is (the actual presence of Paul or of a stranger).[1] For James, in short, truth is not an intrinsic and indefinable quality of certain propositions, as it is for the intellectualists, but is something extrinsic and adventitious which adds itself to a fact of experience, and which consists in certain concrete relations supervening between this fact and the further course of experience.

As for the truths which have been handed down to us, such as that lead melts at 330°, that exercise insures health, that the square of the hypothenuse is equal . . ., etc.—these are summaries of past experience, desiccated formulæ which spring into life only when they again actively take part at some particular juncture to guide our material or intellectual conduct; and then their truth consists, once more, in their practical success in leading us to new and satis-

[1] This latter experience might in turn become retrospectively true or false in relation to some new and ulterior experience which should confirm or negate it (for instance, if I were to go on to recognize Paul's personal idiosyncrasies; or if I were suddenly to perceive that it was John who had disguised himself as Paul for a joke, etc.).

fying experiences, which verify them afresh. (See above, p. 29.)

I cannot attempt to give you an adequate explanation, in so brief a compass, of the whole of James's doctrine of truth. What I have just said of it will suffice to give you a glimpse of the manner in which, by substituting the pragmatic for the intellectualist point of view, he makes the theory of knowledge harmonize with his radical empiricism.

IV. In metaphysics, finally, many who are loudest in proclaiming the method of experience still argue like pure rationalists when, in attempting to explain the world of phenomena, they imagine something else behind which serves as its substratum or support, some ultra-phenomenal or trans-experimental reality, an "Absolute" hidden behind the "Relative"—such as Spencer's Unknowable, Büchner's Force-Matter, Haeckel's Substance, or, in the idealistic camp, Royce's God or Omniscient Thinker, etc. James's radical empiricism rejects all of these metaphysical principles as being quite as arbitrary and useless as the "*a priori*" is in epistemology or the "Soul" in psychology.

In truth, not only do these fictions fail to furnish us with a precise explanation of a single phenomenon, since nothing concrete and particular can ever be deduced from them, but they lend a merely illusory support to the empirical world, which has no need for them and is sufficient in itself. Why pretend to support or fortify this world by a mysterious and inaccessible reality situated beyond, which in turn would require to be supported by another such, and so on to infinity: for where should we stop? Hindu mythology has the world resting upon an elephant, which rests upon a tortoise, which rests upon nothing; and since we inevitably reach this nothing, sooner or later, is it not more reasonable to suppress in the beginning the hypothetical tortoise and elephant and to recognize that the world of experience stands alone with no outside support? What childishness on the part of metaphysicians to wish to explain actual reality by means of a supposed reality, no idea of which latter can be obtained save by symbols borrowed from the former, which in itself should be accepted as simply an inexplicable fact. For as for furnishing a logical deduction of reality, or

showing how being came from nothing, or establishing the necessity of the world or of God, we may as well give it up at the outset. We have to-day left far behind us the tricks of legerdemain by which Hegelian dialectic flattered itself that it accomplished this miracle. A sincere philosophy no longer attempts to unveil the manner in which that which exists sets to work to achieve existence; it accepts the reality already there, and proposes simply to study its details and character, but not to explain its presence, which will always remain a fact and for our thought an enigma. Why is there anything rather than nothing, and why is anything as it is rather than otherwise—these are questions that are susceptible of no answer; although that may not prevent their occurring to many a thinking mind. This being the case, James holds that serious philosophers must stick exclusively to the field of experience—ignoring, however, no part of this field—and that anything that does not form a part of it should be banished from discussion.[1]

[1] In order to be radical, he somewhere says, empiricism should admit in its constructions no element which has

After the considerations which I have just touched upon you will more easily understand the very concise outline in which James summed up his radical empiricism. It consists, according to him, of three points: first a postulate, next a statement of fact, and finally a generalized conclusion.[1]

1. The postulate, on which he bases all discussion, is that "the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience. (Things of an *unexperiencable* nature may exist *ad libitum*, but they form no part of the material for philosophic debate.)" This postulate eliminates at the outset from the field of discussion such metaphysical entities as the Unknowable, the Absolute, the Thing-in-itself, etc., which by definition are situated outside of all possible experience. In this James's radical empiricism agrees with the phenomenalism of Renouvier and of many modern thinkers, but it departs therefrom on the following point.

not been directly experienced, neither should it exclude any element that has been directly experienced.

[1] See *The Meaning of Truth*, Preface, pp. xii *et seq.*

2. The statement of fact is that "the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive (the connections as well as the separations), are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves." This sums up what we have said above concerning the so-called categories of the mind, which it has been the custom to contrast with phenomena as elements of a different kind that hold the phenomena together. James ascertained that this difference of nature does not exist; what is conceptual is homogeneous with what is perceptual, ideas and things are "consubstantial"—that is to say, are all made of the same stuff, namely, experience.

3. From the foregoing statement of fact James derives the generalized conclusion, that all portions of our phenomenal world are continuous one with another, without any foreign principle being necessary to serve as their cement or support. "The parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience. The directly apprehended universe needs, in short, no extraneous trans-empirical connective support, but possesses

in its own right a concatenated or continuous structure."

You see that the three elements into which James divides his radical empiricism converge toward one result, namely, to dispense with everything which is not experienced. This amounts to having definitely exorcised from philosophy the fatal demon of the "Absolute" which has so long possessed it and, like a vampire, sucked its life blood; since in arrogating to itself all true reality, it has left no reality for the empirical and temporal order of things, which is nevertheless both the setting and the substance of our struggles, of our interests, efforts, and affections; in short, of our whole practical and daily existence.

If you should ask me now for more detailed enlightenment as to the nature of this "Experience" which James substitutes as the true reality for the traditional principles of the absolutist metaphysicians, for Matter, Substance, the Idea, etc.; or if you should suspect it to be merely a new word substituted for the old ones;—I could only refer you to yourselves and to your own actual "experience," to let you verify it at first-

hand. You will find there not, assuredly, the whole reality of the universe, but at least a fair sample, a solid and authentic fragment of reality.

In this, James's empiricism is at the opposite pole from current metaphysics. Unquestionably experience is a word—we cannot talk without words—just as Substance, Matter, Idea, etc.; but whereas these last expressions, in the mouths of their adepts, cover something prodigiously abstract, hidden, and distant, which we can attain only in thought or conceive only symbolically, experience or reality according to James designates primarily the most concrete, positive, immediate, and directly given thing that can possibly be; namely, our own present moment, our actual total *Erlebniss* just as we live it, in all its fullness and complexity. They mean at this moment, for instance, this hall with its heat and dazzling lights, the sensations arising from our internal organs, the words which we utter or hear, the ideas and sentiments which they awake in us, the distractions which assail us, our more or less distinct sense of personality, of who and where we are, etc., etc. In ordinary life we frequently forget ourselves, and consider as real

only the objects that particularly occupy us at the moment—flowers, curves of the second power, or the viands at a repast, according as our interest lies momentarily in horticulture, mathematics, or cookery. But inasmuch as we are empirical philosophers we are bound to overlook nothing, and to remember how incapable a formula is of rendering adequately anything of which it is characteristic that it cannot be expressed or described but can only be directly felt. With this precaution one may roughly summarize experience or reality in the following definition which is given somewhere by James: "a field of consciousness including its objects thought or felt, plus an attitude in regard to these objects, plus a sense of self to which this attitude belongs."

The moment, actually lived in its concrete and fluid integrity, in which the present insensibly changes into the past and makes way for the future—that constitutes, then, for each one of us the very pivot of reality, the center of all our knowledge of the rest of things.[1] From this

[1] "Mein Jetzt und Hier ist der letzte Angelpunkt für alle Wirklichkeit, also alle Erkentniss." James quotes this

center the mind reaches out in two directions: on the one hand, I embrace, by my memories and previsions, the most distant past and future, and so I virtually prolong my personal experience far beyond the brief fragment of time which constitutes my immediate present; on the other hand, believing myself not to be alone in the world, I imagine more or less adequately the intimate life of other things. Yet, far as my thought can carry in the universe, I never go outside the domain of experience, actual or possible, of myself or of others. Even the so-called material things, this table, the molecules and atoms which constitute it—if they are more than our perceptions and representations, if they exist in themselves —can only be conceived as consciousnesses, that is to say as experiences also, confused and obscure if you will, but of the same nature as our own.

It would seem from this that James's metaphysics might be classed as Panpsychism,[1] since

aphorism from the eminent philosopher and psychologist of Munich, Th. Lipps, as illustrating his own view.

[1] Panpsychism is the doctrine which rejects the metaphysical existence of the material world as material, and which holds that our entire universe, mineral as well as

it sees only experience everywhere, and since an unconscious experience is a contradiction. But this, I fear, would be somewhat to force James's thought; for although he always seemed sympathetic toward panpsychism he never explicitly supported it; furthermore, *pure* experience, which, James maintains, constitutes reality, has, according to him, nothing conscious about it in the ordinary sense of the word. This, if I mistake not, is how he puts the case:

Our *immediate* experience which we have at any actual instant must not be identified with *pure* experience which is continuous with and of the same stuff as the former, and which is always present, but which it is impossible to recognize as such under the conditions imposed by our own narrow limitations. For us who are heirs to the long travail of human thought immediate experience is already shot through with inveterate beliefs and logical distinctions—those of self and non-self, of body and of spirit, of things real

vegetable and animal, consists at bottom of realities that are immaterial, psychic, mental, conscious, either in an individualized and more or less personal form, or in a more diffused and amorphous state ("mind-stuff," psychic atoms, etc.).

and things thought, of permanent objects and of their variable relations, of causes and effects, etc. —and it would be as difficult for us to trace, in our field of consciousness, the line of demarcation between that which is raw datum or pure experience and that which is intellectual interpretation or thought, as to distinguish in a cyclorama the place where the real objects of the foreground join the painted canvas of the distance. Perhaps pure experience, bare of all conceptual elaboration, does not exist; although to be sure there is the new-born child, and there are special states such as the awakening from unconsciousness, and certain phases of ecstasy or narcosis, etc. But except for these few cases pure experience remains for us a sort of unattainable limit which we only approach, more or less, by trying to live in the present moment without reflecting upon it, by abandoning ourselves to pure sensation, by trying to relax into the most elementary and primordial state of consciousness. Now the point to note is that while most philosophers conceive this primordial state, the origin of all psychic life, as a purely *subjective* state from which subsequent evolution draws forth (no one

knows how) the idea of a non-self and the representation of an exterior world, for James, on the contrary, these primordial facts, these pure experiences are entirely objective, simple phenomena of "sciousness" and not of "consciousness."[1] This means that he holds that the distinction between self and non-self, implied in the word "consciousness," from which we are in a normal state unable to free ourselves, is not primary, but results from a subsequent construction, from a conceptual sorting and classifying of the primitive experiences.

Since we are dealing here with a very obscure subject and since James's thought on it seems to have remained tentative, I will not dwell upon it further, but will emphasize merely the essential characteristic which he sees in reality. I mean its fluidity, its movement, its continuous transformation, exuberant richness, perpetual growth and proliferation; in short, that perpetual be-

[1] One can get some idea of this "sciousness" from the fact that the mystics, and some people on coming out from under the influence of anesthetics (particularly of nitrous oxide), tell of a state in which all sense of the "me" is abolished, and where there is nothing but the purely objective intuition of something present (the world, God, or whatever it may be).

coming which defies all our logical definitions and descriptions, and to understand which one has to turn to life itself. But this leads us to other aspects of James's philosophy.

VI

PLURALISM

Radical Empiricism leads straight from the negation of monism to the assertion of pluralism. For if there is anything empirically evident it is the plurality, the diversity, the multiplicity of phenomena and the impossibility of gathering them into that absolute unity advocated by monistic philosophers. It is true that in the chaos of this universe, at first sight hopeless, our science discovers and our actions tend to introduce certain elements of order, relations ever more far-reaching and more numerous, a growing measure of systematization and harmony. But this work of scientific or practical unification, no matter how far one carries it, does not, in fact, succeed in suppressing the differences, incompatibilities, and oppositions which on every hand continue to strike us. "My pocketbook," said James, "has nothing in common with Mr. Morgan's nor the books which I write with the

thoughts of the King of England." This would suffice to refute monism, which loses all significance if it tolerates the least discontinuity in its block-universe. Pluralism, on the other hand, allows as much correlation and unity among things as one will, provided one leaves to these same things their individuality, and does not force them to melt together, as monism makes them do, or to become telescoped into one.

In truth the plural aspect of the universe is so prevalent and unmistakable that one requires the naïveté of the ostrich to think of escaping it by hiding one's head in the mystery of any unique principle, be it Substance, Energy, Idea, the Unconscious, the Omniscient, Brahma, or anything else. That Absolute which is affirmed to be in itself the only reality and of which the empirical plurality is but the apparent manifestation remains an indemonstrable supposition, a pure matter of faith. Also if the partisans of monism wish to justify their dogma they can do so only by that pragmatic method which they abominate, namely, on the ground of the æsthetic or mystic satisfaction, or of the intellectual ecstasy into which they are thrown by the con-

templation of this Absolute Unity in which all diversities are supposed to disappear, all differences to become reconciled, and all the torments of human experience to fade away. Monism, on the contrary, inspires an instinctive repugnance in temperaments as moral and artistic as that of James, which are left cold by forced attempts at logical unification, and whose deeper interest is attracted to individual realities, to the concrete variety of things, and to all the conflicts in which a chivalrous spirit feels challenged to take a part. In this pragmatic dilemma each man must choose for himself. It is possible, to be sure, that at bottom the monistic hypothesis is right, and that the diversity of this world may be but a little game of illusion in which the Absolute indulges. But James, without denying this theoretical possibility, resolutely and unequivocally adopts the pluralistic hypothesis.

As James sees it, the whole universe consists of a limitless number of individual beings of which each one has its own real and independent existence, but each one of which may establish relationships of all sorts with the others, thus forming an ever growing network of connections. The

unity, or more exactly the uniting, of such a world is not complete at the beginning, but comes to pass little by little, and there is no certainty that it will ever become complete; it is not at all impossible that there should always remain refractory or hostile realities outside. No such contingency is admitted by monism, for which there can be no isolated and individual beings, since every being exists only through its relations to all the others and without the others is nothing.

You perceive the difference between these two opposing conceptions. In the universe of monism the "All" is prior to the parts which it generates, and which it dominates in such a way as to maintain eternally a system that is perfectly closed and complete. It is a cosmos in which all the details are firmly consolidated, like a sphere wherein the existence, place, nature, and function of each element are assigned to it by the whole, and outside of which there is nothing that could augment or diminish this compactness. In the pluralistic universe the parts are prior to the whole, which is always unfinished and which grows fortuitously by the successive addition of independent parts. One can com-

pare it to a co-operative society or to a republic, which is always open to the accession of new members as well as always exposed to attacks from without, and whose compact of federation is perpetually liable to revision. The universe of monism is, on the contrary, a monarchy where all is ordered, a hierarchy administered in inexorable fashion, whose scheduled activity absorbs the entire energy of its subjects without leaving the least independence to any one; where each unit is a cog in the wheels and nothing more.

Yet pluralism encounters a difficulty from which monism considers itself exempt; this is the entering into relationship of these independent existences, or the "composition of consciousnesses," as James expresses it. How can separate individuals, different currents of experience, come to coincide in certain points; how can they meet, or have objects and a universe in common? How understand, for instance, that when I show you this book we can agree upon its existence at this point in space, upon its size, color, and title, an agreement which proves that we perceive the *same* book in spite of the subjective diversity of the tactile and visual sensations which the book

produces in those who perceive it? In the same way we do not doubt that all men see the *same* moon, discuss the *same* universe, and so forth. How does it happen, then, that one object can thus make itself a part of several different fields of consciousness, can serve them as a point of contact or intersection, be for them a " conterminous " experience?

This problem, which luckily has never embarrassed common sense, has greatly preoccupied philosophers, who have offered solutions as various as they are unsatisfactory. Solipsistic idealism overrides the difficulty by saying that there is nothing outside of my own percepts, and that things which I perceive have no reality beyond the consciousness which I have of them, and that there is no question, consequently, of a meeting between separate existences. This theory, which has the merit of being irrefutable, has the defect of being believed in by no one, and James always averred that to uphold a doctrine which one does not believe is to lack not only good sense but sincerity. He himself never ceased to declare himself a realist; he never questioned, that is to say,

the existence in themselves not only of human consciousnesses but also of books, of the moon, and of the world at large. Traditional spiritualism gets out of the difficulty by invoking the "faculties of the Soul." Why should not our souls, although independent of one another, have the faculty of entering into relation either with one another or with the physical world, and of perceiving, therefore, the same moon and the same books? A very simple theory, this, which repeats in new words the fact which it pretends to explain. Idealistic monism, in its turn, solves the difficulty by its doctrine of the universal Consciousness or the omniscient Mind, which, embracing in itself all our individual consciousnesses, serves as a bond of union and basis of agreement—when there is agreement. But we gain little by this explanation, for at once we meet the inverse problem, which is utterly insoluble: How should the Supreme Being go so far astray as to disperse Himself in a dust of individual consciousnesses whose time is spent either in ignoring or in fighting with one another? Materialism, finally, does not even understand the question, and answers irrelevantly, according

to its custom, that all is accounted for by cerebral vibrations.

As for James, he thought for twenty years over this problem of the co-terminousness of consciousnesses, divided as he was between the logical difficulty of conceiving the fact and the invincible evidence afforded by reality, which the very method of pragmatism and of radical empiricism forbade him to set in doubt. For, in short, these mutual contacts, these unceasing identifications of our mental individualities, are asserting themselves at every moment, in all our relations with our fellow-men. And this is even more true of special domains, such as that of religion, in which innumerable souls have undergone the immediate, and for them absolutely certain, experience of entering into communion with a superior consciousness which is at once a part of them and yet infinitely surpasses them.

He pondered, as he tells us, long and vainly over this mystery and over the related problem of how one and the same entity (an object, an idea, a feeling, etc.) can belong at the same time to several different streams of consciousness; or, what amounts to the same thing, how independent

minds can come to meet and interpenetrate. His final conclusion was that we have here a fact which transcends logic, and which is irrational as all reality is irrational, but which is for all that none the less certain, and that to see in this an insurmountable difficulty is to be guilty of nothing less than vicious intellectualism.[1]

Our thought, to be sure, cannot admit contradictions; but reality is never in itself contradictory; it is we who make it appear so by bringing it down to our abstract and fallacious definitions. In regard to the point in question it would be positively inadmissible to suppose that a thing belonging *exclusively* to one mind should also belong to another; but our mania for absolute and rigid logic has introduced this "exclusively" where it has no business to be. Immediate ex-

[1] *Cf. A Pluralistic Universe*, especially Chapter V. James relates that he was finally moved by the example of Fechner, who admitted "that states of consciousness, so-called, can separate and combine themselves freely," and especially by his reading of the contemporaneous and profoundly anti-intellectualist philosopher, M. Bergson, to resolve finally "to *give up the logic*, fairly, squarely, and irrevocably," as a philosophical method; for "reality, life, experience, concreteness, immediacy, use what word you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it" (pp. 181 and 212).

perience shows us that in actual reality a thing belonging to one mind can at the same time belong also to another. In other words, the "*coalescence*," composition, communion, or mutual interpenetration of minds, strange as it appears if one reasons apart from the facts, has nothing impossible in itself, since it is taking place in life on every hand, at least in certain elementary forms. This must be admitted, then, without hesitation by the empirical thinker who has definitely broken with the intellectualist prejudices and, turning his back on abstract logic, has resolved henceforth to take his philosophy directly from the great current of immediate reality. There is no further need to explain the given fact of the composition of minds, any more than of their separation, or indeed of their very existence.

VII

TYCHISM

To this as it were "transverse" pluralism—arguing for the simultaneous existence of a multitude of independent although interrelated consciousnesses—must be joined, in James's universe, a "longitudinal" or successive pluralism, which holds that each one of these consciousnesses, instead of presenting a fixed and immovable state, is found to be in a condition of perpetual change. I have already insisted on one point—which escapes all exact description but which we verify directly in ourselves—the fact of the fluent continuity, of the incessant transformation, in a word of that *ever becoming*, which characterizes our mental life. "We do not bathe twice in the same stream," said Heraclitus. Neither does the stream of consciousness ever cease flowing and becoming "other" than itself. No one of the ripples, or of the moments, is entirely like its predecessor, nor can it be deduced therefrom by

logical necessity; the new, the different, the unauthorized, the unforeseen, everywhere seeps into and filters through the old. This forthcoming without interval and without rest of that which has never been before, this appearance out of nothing of the adventitious fact, this reality of change and authentic novelty of the future—that is what is affirmed by Tychism (or Fortuitism),[1] which is the inseparable complement of James's pluralism and is the direct negation of determinism; even as pluralism is of monism. This is in a word Chance.

There is no room for chance in the block-universe of the monists, where the most rigorous determinism rules down to its minutest part. Without doubt, when in ordinary life the determinist philosophers cast dice or make plans for the future, they use, like the rest of the world, the term chance and its various synonyms: luck, risk, eventuality, alternative, contingency, possibility, coincidence, etc. But they say themselves that these expressions are improper and are ex-

[1] These two expressions are taken from Peirce and are, according to James, practically synonymous with Bergson's *devenir réel* and *évolution*

cused only by our ignorance, and that nothing in actual reality corresponds to this notion of indeterminateness. The unfolding of events does not allow, in their philosophy, for any alternatives, since it but brings to light, under the form of a temporal succession, that which was potentially fixed at one stroke by the very existence of the supreme principle. Whatsoever happens at any one moment is *necessary*, what does not happen is *impossible;* both the necessity and the impossibility are absolute, and there is no room between them for either contingency or real *possibility.*

William James was always an enemy of determinism. At first he was so instinctively, because he found that as soon as life ceased to be a real combat of uncertain issue, and became a preconcerted puppet-show with its *dénouement* settled in advance, he was no longer capable of taking it seriously. Later, his opposition to determinism was based on conviction, because, partly from arguments of Renouvier and partly from a fresh examination of the facts, he came to believe firmly in ambiguous futures. In fine, his radical empiricism furnished him with the

positive basis for tychism in the fact of the freedom of the will; for the consciousness of bringing to pass one out of a number of possibilities is a *datum* as precise and concrete as any other, a genuine experience which we have over and over again, and one which is accompanied by the immediate conviction of its objective reality.

Are we ever, indeed, more keenly aware of reality than when we exercise the deliberate choice of an alternative and upon this risk our future? Of course one can always allege that this feeling of a plurality of equally realizable possibilities, and of our own free intervention in favor of one of them, is illusory. We have no experimental means by which to refute the determinist hypothesis, since we cannot turn back the wheels of time and prove that the course of events would have been different had we willed otherwise. The proof of free-will will never be empirically given other than by this inner experience of *choice*, and since the appraisal by which we declare this experience true or false itself implies a choice, one finds oneself logically enclosed in a circle from which there is no exit unless by an appeal to an authority other than

logic. Thus it has been said that it is by an act of liberty that we assert liberty. But those who uphold determinism, and consider the feeling of the ambiguity of futures and the reality of our initiatives to be chimerical, can also not, without begging the question, further justify their thesis; and it remains a mere *parti pris*. For it is useless to maintain that the voluntary agent has *in fact* chosen a certain course, because this will never prove that he has chosen it *of necessity*, and that he could not have chosen another.

James was also less concerned with arguing directly in favor of free-will, as corroborated by inner experience, than he was with refuting the often absurd objections of those who deny it. When one wants to drown one's dog, one first declares him mad, says the proverb. In their antipathy to liberty the determinists lay the worst crimes at its door. Do they not, indeed, go so far as to aver that under free-will there would be no uniformities, and that in consequence all scientific research might as well be abandoned! "If free-will exists," said one of James's metaphysical compatriots, "who knows but that half of the inhabitants of London will commit suicide

before to-morrow?" James has no trouble in refuting such ineptitudes by simply having recourse to his concrete method. The possible futures between which we choose are in fact limited to alternatives which originate in our character and our environment, so that our liberty is not unrestricted; and whatever event befalls, it will always be easy to find antecedents of the same sort with which to connect it. This is all that science needs to build upon.

For instance, upon waking in the morning I deliberate as to whether I shall lie abed, or get up and go to work. What the hypothesis of my free-will asserts, in this particular case, is the possibility of either action, but by no means that of many other imaginary and extravagant decisions, such as setting fire to my bed or throwing myself out of the window. And of course my liberty, supposing it to be real, to rise or to lie abed cannot prevent the learned from yielding to their little foible and explaining my conduct "scientifically"—*ex post facto*—by attributing it either to my "sense of duty" or to my "instinctive laziness," both of which certainly existed in me before, and have shown their antagonism

on many a previous occasion! You see that the hypothesis of free-will (or of ambiguous futures, the reality of choice, or tychism) would in no way involve the downfall of science, as some are pleased to suppose, nor make the world any more chaotic than it already is.

At bottom the two rival hypotheses are equally irrefutable and equally indemonstrable, because they always arise from a personal and extra-logical preference for one or other of the two mental attitudes, between which we are ever torn —the *retrospective* attitude of cognizing intellect and the *prospective* attitude of active life. "We live forward, we understand backward." [1] When I look backward to embrace in my thought the reality which has already come to pass and in which nothing further can be changed, my intellectual need of simplicity (since I am unable to reduce the succession of facts to a purely logical identity, which would be ideal) contents itself with that construction which seems most economical, and so imagines that each event was already

[1] A phrase which originated with the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, was cited by Höffding, and quoted by James in *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, 1905, Vol. II, p. 180.

virtually contained, without ambiguity, in the preceding state of things. Thus I come to suppose that determinism is the immediately given fact, and so, step by step, I finally arrive at monism, all the moments of the past seeming to telescope themselves, by this same supposed necessity, until the whole universe has been compressed into its starting point or its absolute principle. When, on the other hand, I look forward, at the very moment of making a resolve, I feel that the imminent future is still indeterminate and depends only upon me; it will be what I make it by my choosing between the different possibilities presented; and in the act of volition I am conscious of myself as a free agent and creator who, at this point in space and time, effectively decides the course of things.

Which of these two opposing attitudes goes deeper and reaches reality itself? The first, is always the reply of the intellectualists, for whom "to understand" is the main issue and is all that makes life worth living. The second, replies James, whose energetic temperament, pressing ceaselessly forward, and whose radical empiricism, ever hostile to abstractions, countenances no

doubt in this regard. It is clear that, for him, reality, above all things, cannot be found in the retrospective field of the intellect, where it is retained only in an attenuated conceptual form. Reality is found only in the living and prospective experience of the immediate present where the "I" palpitates, hesitates, deliberates, decides, acts, and adds its personal contribution, its own initiative, to the history of the universe. At each point where one out of several possibilities is realized, something really new is accomplished in the world. Viewed from the outside, it is pure chance, good or bad fortune; from the inside, it is an act of spontaneity and of creative freedom.

It is to be noted that these critical points at which the curve of future events suddenly turns in one direction rather than in another, these moments of apparent choice, are not rare or exceptional occasions in the course of things but are the common rule. At every moment and by every one of us the die is being cast and the Rubicons, great or small, are being crossed. For, according to James, there is everywhere choice in life; choice exercised by our organs of sense

which seize upon certain forces of the exterior world while rejecting others; choice amid the chaos of sense-perceptions of which some are noted and retained while others are as quickly effaced; choice among the many properties of an object or the many aspects of a phenomenon; choice of that which seems to us essential and which we preserve as alone worthy to be counted; choice exercised by our voluntary attention, as it surveys the whole field of ideas with which our memory or our imagination assails us; choice in art, in science, or in business, of that which has value for our purposes; choice, above all, in our moral life, of that which we may wish to be, of ideals, and of principles which we take for guides and to the triumph of which we consecrate our strength; choice, consequently, even in philosophy and religion, of that which shall be for us reality itself. Choice always and everywhere! Man is essentially a being who chooses. And by each one of these choices a real difference is made in the universe, and a portion of the future is decided; for every choice leaves behind it a fold, the beginning of a habit, the dawn of a law, and a hint of future states which later choices will

confirm and develop, and which it will always be more difficult, though always possible, to change or to annul by new choices of an opposite sort.

What a responsibility this doctrine imposes on us. It makes of us and of our least thoughts not mere links, not passive transmitters of impulses from outside us in the endless chain of universal necessity, but veritable initiators, spontaneous and effective agents in a universe about to be created, the final nature of which will be determined by our own free decisions.

VIII

MELIORISM AND MORALISM

We must remember, however, that it was not merely in order to gratify man by representing him as being the captain of his fate that James adopted his tychistic doctrine and took the consciousness of free-will so seriously; but it was because of the brute fact that this world is full of evil and often disappoints our highest and most cherished aspirations. We can hope to better it only if it is still plastic, still in process of elaboration, and to some extent capable of being molded. Whereas the block-universe is essentially immutable, and its spontaneity would appear to have been exhausted in that initial act by which it brought itself into being. James believed that if this world did in fact answer to all our needs and did leave nothing to be desired, then indeed we should have no objection to its being a realm of the most absolute necessity and should never dream of coveting a liberty which

could only mar our happiness. In a universe of such heavenly perfection the most that one could ask would be merely, as in the dream of the deterministic monists, to contemplate its unity, so sublime and so secure against the unforeseen and the disagreeable. But in this world as we actually experience it this is far from being the case.

Clearly, if the past and the present gave us complete satisfaction, it would not occur to us to wish for a different future. Surely it is because the actual world disappoints us so sorely, and forces upon us so much sorrow and confusion, that we feel the need of transforming and improving it. The sense of being able to contribute toward such a betterment, and with some hope of success in the end, thus becomes the secret spring of all our activity as reasonable and moral beings. This inducement is lacking in the determinist philosophies, which regard the salvation of the world either as inevitable and *necessary*, in the natural course of things, or on the other hand as *impossible* in view of the hopelessly evil nature of existence. Between these extremes of optimism and pessimism—both fatal to our

moral nature in that they paralyze all effort—James chooses the middle course of "meliorism." The world, he declares, can be made better. Its salvation, although not achieved nor even as yet assured, is at least *possible,* and this possibility is not merely an abstract and conceptual one, which would interest us little, but is a concrete one. It is guaranteed by these two facts: first, that we are here with our ideals, ready to strive for their realization, and to intervene effectively in the world's destiny; second, that this world is not a rigid and finished block, but an aggregation of independent elements, where nothing prevents us from separating out and eliminating what we find evil, so that all trace of it shall disappear in that final world toward which we strive.

James's pluralism and tychism may, indeed, be implied in his radical empiricism, and freedom and contingency may be given in immediate experience, but what in his eyes sets the final seal of truth on these doctrines is their pragmatic value; that is to say, the fact that they are the necessary conditions or fundamental aspects of meliorism. And meliorism is, in its turn, the

necessary condition of his moralism. To take our moral nature, with all its demands, seriously—this is the first and last word of James's philosophy. The clear destiny of man, as experience reveals it, is to be not a passive observer in a universe in which he can accomplish nothing, but it is rather to assert himself, in the perverse and refractory world which surrounds him, by actively imposing his ideals (moralism); this presupposes, not indeed the certainty, but at least the hope and the real possibility of success (meliorism); and this presupposes that the course of events should be susceptible of true innovations (tychism); while evil, instead of being inherent in the universe, can be expelled from it, as one chance element from among many others (pluralism).

James's moralism and meliorism have many aspects which deserve to be brought out. I can touch upon only a few of them. In the first place, let us remember that James has nowhere defined what he would deem to be the rightly ordered condition of the universe nor what ideals would be realized in such a state. Trusting to each one to particularize this according to his bent,

he takes it in a quite general sense to mean a state of things which would give us the loftiest and most complete satisfactions. To go further into details would have been, after all, to outline a treatise on morals, a doctrine of the "supreme good," and the like. But nothing was more contrary to his anti-dogmatic mental attitude, mindful as he was of the inexhaustible riches of reality, than this idea which so haunts the minds of moralists, of fixing all too definitely the heirarchy of virtue and of good. This seemed to him as absurd, as fatal to liberty and progress, as it would be to promulgate, *ne varietur*, an *a priori* outline of science. Ethics, like physics, he said, will never be completed till the last man has had his final experience, and said his last word. Moral life is in a continual state of growth and one must not attempt to confine it in a closed and rigid system, which, even were it that of such a genius as Epicurus, Kant, or Spencer, would never be more than the personal apprehension of its author, and would be more or less arbitrary and narrow. One cannot absolutely prescribe human conduct, for each concrete moral situation is something new and unique, defying theoretical re-

strictions, and the moral agent must in the last resort judge and act on his own account.

Naturally James does not condemn the attempts at systematization which philosophers may undertake, provisionally, and which at least serve the purpose of stimulating reflection. But he always distrusted them, fearing lest their normative value should be exaggerated and their authority, reinforced by the veneration for great names, should become an obstacle to the free development and evolution of the moral life. The height of virtue, he said, consists in upsetting established rules which have become too narrow for the given case. And one shudders at the thought of any pontiff wielding the temporal power and imposing his moral system, however excellent, upon us. Complete anarchy would be better than this strait-jacket, which would soon put an end to spontaneity and progress. For the idealistic monists, of course, there exists a transcendent morality, the eternal and perfect morality of the Absolute, who alone knowing *all* possible desires and goods is in a position to classify them immutably according to their relative importance. But since the "Absolute" has not admitted his

votaries into his secrets, they know, as a matter of fact, no more about this definitive ethics than does any first-comer. The ethics which they preach expresses no more than their personal feeling, and has no pre-eminent claim on our attention. Each man's personal intuition on questions of moral conduct must be for him the final criterion.[1]

Another feature of James's moralism is what one may call its heroic character. One gathers from all his work the decided impression that if he had constructed an ethics it would not have leaned toward the Epicurean. Man, in his eyes, does not feel himself to be really living except in the tonic atmosphere of determined struggle. When things are made too easy for us we soon lose our spirit. There are in each of us reserves of energy which a comfortable and humdrum life fails to call out, but which are sometimes awakened at the touch of the exceptional or the tragic. Then it is that we feel really ourselves. For we are made for the "strenuous mood," for vigorous, enthusiastic, and resolute activity. As-

[1] *Cf.* "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in *The Will to Believe.* New York, 1891, pp. 184-215.

suredly such tension cannot be continuously maintained; there must be times of intermission and rest. But it is always to this state of activity and fortitude—to heroism, in a word—that we must return if we wish to feel the quickening contact of reality and to make our mark upon it.

It is thus that William James, the impressionable observer and the stanch advocate of peace, of freedom and enlightenment, was at the same time an upholder of the warlike virtues; he valued courage, devotion, and the endurance of severe discipline. He held that since war is no longer morally admissible, for reasons of every kind, it would be a good thing for our civilization to find an educational equivalent, a tonic substitute to maintain the virility of human kind. This indispensable moral equivalent he descried in a voluntary simplicity, in the steadfast renunciation of the luxuries and superfluities of life, solely in the interest of a more untrammeled spiritual progress.[1] Here again James did not go into the

[1] See his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (pp. 367-369) and particularly his pamphlet "The Moral Equivalent of War" in *Memories and Studies* (New York, 1911), where we find ideas analogous to those of Thury on the

particulars involved by such a reform, and only insisted with moving eloquence on the necessity of developing heroism. He was aware, indeed, that at present any too detailed scheme would be theoretical and inopportune, for every one must judge from his own point of view what he can and ought to do.

Let us consider one further aspect of meliorism. The outlook which James offers us is singularly lofty and disinterested, for it does not assure us that the efforts which it enjoins on us for the amelioration of the world shall be successful; it merely allows us to hope. This purpose will be realized only on condition that each member of the universe co-operates in it and does his individual best. Now there is no guarantee that this will be the case. Never mind, said James, when our moral nature is healthy it needs but hope in order to live and to act; even a chance of succeeding in the great work of transforming the world is enough. For the goal is worth the risk and sacrifice even if one were to fail.

replacement of military service by a service not less arduous, but economically and socially more useful.

"Suppose," says James, "that the world's author put the case to you before creation, saying: 'I am going to make a world not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own "level best." I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger, yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession? Will you trust yourself and trust the other agents enough to face the risk?'

"Should you in all seriousness, if participation in such a world were proposed to you, feel bound to reject it as not safe enough? Would you say that, rather than be part and parcel of so fundamentally pluralistic and irrational a universe, you preferred to relapse into the slumber of nonentity from which you had been momentarily aroused by the tempter's voice?

"Of course if you are normally constituted, you would do nothing of the sort. There is a healthy-minded buoyancy in most of us which such a universe would exactly fit. We would

therefore accept the offer—'Top! und schlag auf schlag!' It would be just like the world we practically live in; and loyalty to our old nurse Nature would forbid us to say no. The world proposed would seem 'rational' to us in the most living way." [1]

James in no way recoils before the possibility of finding himself among those whom the transformed and bettered world will necessarily reject. While salvation is, according to optimistic monism, essentially universal and complete, like the block-universe itself, it can for pluralism come about only piecemeal and for each element individually, according to the special relations in which this element stands to the others. It is possible if not inevitable that this salvation will never be complete, certain individuals and objects being unfit and having to be excluded from the final fabric. Perfection, in other words, is probably realizable only at the price of selections, of radical sacrifices, and of downright renunciations. Such a view is unendurable to many people, who in the final state of the world would have everything retained. But it forms a logical

[1] *Pragmatism.* New York, 1907, pp. 290-291.

part of James's moralism and he accepts it without hesitation. The old Puritans, he said, were willing to be damned if that contributed to the glory of God. Such greatness of soul on the part of the believer should still be ours, and we ought, where the salvation of the universe demands it, to consent to our own annihilation. For myself, said James, I believe that this world is a real adventure involving positive dangers, and nevertheless I do not propose to turn my back on it. If I am to suffer shipwreck and never to reach the port, still I shall not abandon the venture; others will have better fortune, and will succeed. It is well worth while to consecrate oneself to the moral ideal and to risk one's life for its triumph, even though one is not sure of coming out saved.

It is proper, however, to add that with James an element of sympathy always tempers what, without it, would be a rather frigid stoicism. Nor does this detract from the dignity of his ethics; it only makes the upward path more accessible to natures of a less heroic mold. Judging by the manner in which many of our co-laborers address themselves to this work of amelioration, we

might well give up hope at the outset, and marvel that James should have been able to believe in the possibility of a salvation which he recognized to be conditional on the individual man's doing the best he can. For how few there are who do this! If, then, in view of the failures and betrayals which crop up at every moment, both in us and about us, James did not feel that salvation was hopelessly doomed to failure, it was because he counted on other and more effective forces than our own to compensate for the defections and to make—not indeed *certain*, since that will depend also on us—but at least possible, the definite triumph of good. James, in short, never ceased to believe that a divine power is contributing toward the progress of this world and of humanity. This brings us to the subject of his Theism.

IX

THEISM

We have said that James's special philosophic preoccupation seems to have been to reconcile the demands of the moral and religious life with those of science, which latter he had no less at heart, and of safeguarding our faith in God from the perils with which the growth of reason and the attacks of so-called scientific free-thinking seem to threaten it. An interesting example of this preoccupation is furnished by the title itself of one of his first lectures: "Reflex Action and Theism" (1881). It required, indeed, James's originality to juxtapose two terms which are seemingly so unrelated. What connection can there be between theism, the philosophical doctrine of a personal God at work in the world, and reflex action, the physiological notion of our nervous centers being merely an organ of connection between centripetal and centrifugal nerves? Here in a few words is James's answer:

By virtue of the connection between mind and body, our mental life should present analogies with our nervous system. Now this latter consists of three parts, so to speak, of which the middle one (the reflex centers, including the cerebral cortex) serves to connect the first (the sensory nerves) with the third (the motor nerves), and has for its sole function the transforming of stimuli, sent in pell-mell from the periphery, into co-ordinated reactions which are adapted to the needs of the organism. We should expect, therefore, to find a similar teleological arrangement in the life of the spirit. This latter comprises also three great divisions: sensory perceptions, intellectual operations, and voluntary motor actions, which, broadly speaking, we call conduct. This amounts to saying that the central department, that of the intelligence—which gives rise to all our theories and ideas—serves the sole function of intermediary between the chaos of brute sensations received from the outer world and the integrated and rational conduct in which our personality expresses itself.

From this psychological scheme, based on the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system,

James concludes that our intellectual faculties, even in their most abstract manifestation, have no other purpose than that of determining conduct, and no other materials than the data of experience, and that therefore they must find themselves elaborating a conception of the universe which corresponds to the perceived facts and justifies the conduct. This three-part analogy constitutes a most ingenious anatomical justification of pragmatism as well as of radical empiricism and, as you shall see, of theism itself. In fact, James has no difficulty in showing that the only conception of the universe which gives full satisfaction to the deepest emotional and volitional tendencies of our soul is the theistic conception. It is therefore the only conception which will emerge in genuinely human conduct and allow full play to our entire being, with its moral needs, its ideal aspirations, and its visions of perfection. All philosophies which do not rise to a belief in God (such as positivism, agnosticism, materialism, and naturalism) can serve but to paralyze our springs of action. They represent the universe as so indifferent or hostile that we find ourselves humanly and morally out of

touch with it. How indeed are we to feel any devotion or any spark of sympathy and enthusiasm for a reality which is but a congeries of atoms, a tangle of blind forces, from which we can expect nothing but the ultimate obliteration of all that we most value? That is why the intellect, the central department of our psychical life, must come around to theism, if it is to fulfil the essentially regulative function which is assigned to it by the doctrine of reflex action, namely, to shape our disordered sensory experiences into a conception of the world which encourages all our aspirations, even the highest, and stimulates our greatest activity.

James did not profess, be it understood, to have proved the existence of God. For this it is not enough to have shown that this is the only hypothesis consistent with the third department in our analogy, that of conduct, for it must be proved consistent also with the first, that of the sense data. Now we are far from having done this latter, since it is well known that the sciences built on these data do not testify in favor of theism. There is, then, between the two terminal departments of our nature an opposition, which

it is precisely the part of the intelligence to reconcile by elaborating a philosophy which shall harmonize our scientific ideas of the universe with our need of a divine being. This is a problem upon which all thinkers would do well to labor. Until it is solved the existence of God remains a mere belief, although a rational and entirely legitimate one.

That is all very well, you will perhaps say, but how can we reconcile this faith in God, for which James argued so skilfully, with his pluralism, the very nature of which excludes from the universe any first principle, any highest unity, any "Absolute," in fact anything which the human mind conceives as being of the divine nature?

Without doubt, if God must possess all these sublime qualifications, there is no place for him in the philosophy of William James. But must he? Let us first determine exactly what we mean by God. In order to do this let us appeal with James to the pragmatic method, in the hope of clearing up our strangely confused idea of the divine being, and inquire into the concrete consequences of this idea in our experience. To

this end let us examine, then, the two principal conceptions of divinity which philosophers offer us.

The first, the scholastic conception, defines God by what are known as his metaphysical attributes:—unity, aseity and perseity (self-existence), infinity, necessity, immutability, and others. What concrete effects, what practical interest, can such a series of properties have for us? Absolutely none. This pompous string of long words which so edified the learned doctors of the middle ages no longer has real meaning for us, so impossible is it to draw from it any consequence whatsoever for our actual life. Therefore you will not be astonished that James discarded it from the outset, as being devoid of real significance.[1]

The second conception is much more interesting. It is that of idealistic pantheism: God is the universal conscience, the omniscient thinker,

[1] "A pretentious sham. . . . It means less than nothing, in its pompous robe of adjectives" . . . said James with regard to the scholastic definition of God, which he quotes in the following form: "Deus est Ens, a se, extra et supra omne genus, necessarium, unum, infinite perfectum, simplex, immutabile, immensum, æternum, intelligens," etc. (*Pragmatism*. New York, 1907, p. 121).

the absolute individuality, of which each one of us is but an infinitesimal fragment, and which includes in the unity of its being the totality of possible experiences, just as I include my personal feelings and ideas in my own little field of consciousness. James had, close at hand, a notable representative of this metaphysics in the person of his colleague and friend, Professor Royce.[1] But their affection and their mutual esteem could not bring about their agreement in philosophy. However deeply spiritual and religious the doctrine of Royce may be, it is nevertheless a monism whose consequences James was utterly unwilling to accept.

Even from the purely intellectual point of view he found its difficulties insurmountable. Royce proves, or at least undertakes by dint of dialectic subtlety to prove, that God, who includes within himself the whole of experience, enjoys in one timeless span all felicity, wisdom,

[1] Josiah Royce, professor of the history of philosophy at Harvard, was one of the most celebrated contemporary American philosophers. Of Royce and absolute idealism James has said: "In its essential features, Spinoza was its first prophet, Fichte and Hegel were its middle exponents, and Josiah Royce is its best contemporary representative."

power, and goodness. But then how comes it that with all these perfections he can experience (in us who are an integral part of him) those woful states of ignorance, misery, and sin which are too positive and constant experiences in our life for a serious philosopher to allow himself to treat them as negligible quantities: on the mere pretext that they are only limitations, privations, and non-being! How can my curiosity as to the contents of one small locked drawer be any part of God, for whom there are no mysteries? Or how, in warfare, can he be immanent in both camps and in each one desire his own annihilation in the other? These are contradictions from which we can escape only by completely distinguishing God's point of view from that of finite beings; and by continuing with such distinctions until we come down to concrete individual objects, and thus emerge in pluralism. Thus when, instead of contenting oneself with vague formulæ, one tries to apply idealistic monism to detailed facts it becomes unintelligible and collapses. James wondered how rationalists, such as Royce and other partisans of the "Absolute," could pass so easily over logical difficulties by which he had

been stopped; while these same proud dialecticians professed to look down on the empiricist and pragmatist as being merely an amateur philosopher. This seemed to him frivolity, an aberration of the intellectualist mind, which when intoxicated with abstract principles comes to despise concrete realities.

But James found still more serious moral objections to pantheism. To be sure he recognizes that this doctrine has the unique pragmatic value of providing its adepts with "moral holidays," by affording them a God whose universal immanence will infallibly insure, regardless of their own failures and shortcomings, the salvation of the universe. How comforting for sick souls who are bowed down by the sense of their own impotence to be able to say that all will still be well since nothing happens here below without God's consent. But this weak quietism lacks zest for energetic and healthy minds which see in these "moral vacations" of the pantheists merely a confession of indolence. Nevertheless, even energetic minds have their moments of lassitude and discouragement: indeed, there is no one so happy as wholly to escape the crushing sense

of inadequacy and failure, which seems to be a universal human experience, and for which there is no remedy save to fall back on the infinite pity. And so most men live by compromise, and continually oscillate between morbid and healthy moods, that is, between the attitude of religious pantheism and that of anti-pantheistic moralism. The philosopher who wants to be consistent has to choose between these two logically incompatible conceptions, one implying pluralism, the other monism.[1] James chose moralism and remained faithful to it, and further proceeded to show that this is not irreconcilable with (an anti-pantheistic) religious faith.

We have seen above (p. 121) that the leading consideration in this choice was not so much a sense of moral responsibility as it was the problem of evil, which cannot be solved by any form of monism[2] and is especially fatal to the more

[1] "Any absolute moralism is pluralism; any absolute religion is a monism," says James in his introduction to *The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James* (Boston, 1884, p. 118), where he has described this antinomy with great clearness.

[2] Evil can of course not be reconciled with the much advertised perfection of the "Absolute," and since for monism it is as much a part of the block-universe as is

sophisticated varieties. If he was never able to reconcile himself to the *unconscious* substance of the naturalistic philosophies, which gives rise to evil and good impartially, he could still less accept the *conscious* "Absolute" of idealistic pantheism. The first seemed to him meaningless, but the second aroused his moral indignation. For would this omniscient and omnipotent being, who, comprehending in himself all finite existences, countenances and as it were sanctifies by his participation all the abominations and horrors of this poor universe, not be more of a monster than a God?

James saw that the empirical reality of pain and evil is the rock upon which all the pantheisms shatter, even the more religious ones such as that of Royce. No discourse on the beauty of nature could make James forget the cruelty

the good, it cannot be expected ever to disappear. Therefore one must either voluntarily close one's eyes to it with a fine contempt for facts, or else one must become a pessimist. These insoluble difficulties which constitute the "problem of evil" disappear in pluralism for which the world is, from its origin, an aggregation of independent forces of which the good are consequently not responsible for the bad, and where one may always hope to be rid of the latter by driving them out of the final organization.

found throughout the animal kingdom, and no panegyric on divine goodness could blind him to human suffering. The diverse tragedies recorded in the daily press,—the suicide of the starving laborer, the ferocity of the degenerate criminal, and the many individual and social injustices and miseries,—are not in James's eyes, as in those of most readers, melodramatic trifles of the moment, but are grave *facts*, actual ingredients in the universe, before which the most celebrated essays in theodicy seem to him ironical and impertinent. He sees the concrete manifestations of evil arise in overwhelming arraignment of the beautiful metaphysical systems of the closet philosophers, of the official optimism of Leibnitz, of the fatuous serenity of those professors who, from their cushioned armchairs, demonstrate that everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds, that evil is but a lesser good, that all that is real is rational, and that all is perfect in the "Absolute." . . . . If anything could have driven James to exasperation it would have been this air of superiority that is assumed by idealistic philosophers to the evil which besets us on every hand. But he knew that persons so self-

satisfied are not to be moved by argument, and it only remained for him to record the interesting empirical fact that persons claiming to speak in the name of absolute reality can be so blinded by the perfection of their "Absolute" that they do not perceive the concrete evils spread before their eyes. The pantheistic conception of God no more appealed to James's perspicacity and keen common sense than had the old scholastic definitions.

But, you will say, if the absolute and infinite God, the God of monotheism, is so repugnant to him and seems to him inadmissible, what God does he leave for us? Why, plainly, the God of all simple religious souls, the God whom they could not live without, whose presence is for them the source of all joy and of all energy. For indeed there is no need that this "higher presence" should be the *All* as conceived by the pantheist: the religious person is wholly satisfied if he feels it as a *part* of the universe, so long as it is the most ideal part as well as the most profound, and so long as it has sufficient affinities with his own moral nature.

In other words, what we need is a God who

really exists, who is a personality lying outside our own, and other than us,—a power not ourselves and more powerful than we are; not a God of whom we speak in the neuter gender and in the third person, as of some general law, but a God whom we address directly and intimately as "Thou"; not a distant God enthroned, majestic and impassive, on high, but a God who will descend into the dust and degradation, to suffer and to labor there, to join us in our daily struggle against the powers of evil and all the obstacles arising in our path, a God who knows and appreciates our ideals, and who collaborates with us and we with Him to bring about their realization. Now it is not monism, however idealistic it be, which can furnish us with such a God; but only pluralism.

The pluralistic and tychistic universe is unfinished and imperfect; order is in the painful process of being created, bit by bit, through the efforts and voluntary co-operation of certain of the members. But such, James felt, is the universe that experience reveals to us, and moreover no other sort of universe would afford the opportunity for moral action; in no other could we

hope to meet, amid all the various individualities there congregated, that powerful and sympathetic Helper and Companion of whom our heart has need, that personal and living God to whom our soul aspires.

But is He to be found there? This is a question of fact to which James's radical empiricism enabled him to give an affirmative answer. For if all that is experienced is real there is nothing more real than God, as the whole religious life of humanity bears witness. The study that James had made of this domain convinced him that there exist specific and distinct experiences, impossible to deduce from the ordinary facts of psychology, which testify to the unexpected intervention in our so-called natural world of a supernatural and divine reality,—the same in essence as that which is best in us, but infinitely superior. The typical example of these special interventions, which pure logic or natural science could never have foreseen, is found in those remarkable cases of individuals who, halted at the brink of some utter moral failure, suddenly find themselves invaded, dominated, and uplifted by a marvelous vitalizing power which bears them

on to victory. The sudden conversions witnessed by evangelical Christianity, the extraordinary mental and physical healings of the American sects of mind-cure, faith-healing, etc., are the most impressive indications of the existence, in and about us, of a sphere of reality which remains unsuspected by physics or indeed by ordinary ethics; a sphere of which we touch only the periphery, and which is to our daily human existence somewhat as that is to the life of our domestic animals. Our dogs and cats share some of our humbler interests, such as the need for food and shelter, but how are they to understand the mysterious occupations of reading, writing, or conversing, at which they see us busied for hours at a time? What can they comprehend of such activities? In the same way our religious experience brings us in contact with modes and zones of existence to which we feel that our own spiritual ideals somehow naturally appertain, but into which it is impossible for us to penetrate very far, so greatly does this domain of the higher powers surpass our comprehension.

The sudden reformations of character to which I have just alluded are often accompanied

by nervous crises, visions, and other dramatic circumstances, but these are only the more striking instances of an untiring superhuman intervention which can also be discovered working through all our daily life. These subtle and less tangible manifestations are experienced in the intimate life of innumerable souls, and, though less easily remarked by others, they are by reason of their pervasiveness and frequent repetition even more convincing to the one who experiences them. This is actually the religious experience again, though it is less commonly recognized as such, and it varies extraordinarily in different persons.

"Among the peculiarities of this experience," says M. Emile Boutroux, in summing up James, "may be noted:—the essential and unshaken joyousness of the spirit; the healing of moral and physical illnesses that is brought about by the abandonment of self to the all-powerful divine bounty; the consciousness of sin and the moral suffering which we feel to be due to causes over which we have no control; the secret unrest of the soul, which is conscious within itself of many warring personalities that it cannot bring into

accord; the conversion which, whether sudden or gradual, substitutes for a given personality another quite different and incomparably superior; the saintliness which makes toward a permanent and a more than human perfection; the mystical spiritual life in which man, while remaining himself, has the consciousness of living the very life of God; the prayer which in supernatural ways modifies the course of our thoughts and of things.

"In experiencing these different phenomena the individual is aware of entering into relation with powers conscious and personal like himself, but immeasurably superior to his own nature. He perceives that while experiencing the religious emotion his life is transformed, ennobled, and animated by an enthusiasm, a power for heroism, and a confidence of success of which in himself he was incapable; and he is naturally led to the conviction that the being who in this manner has heard, understood, helped, and cured him, and created in him a new personality, is a consciousness, an actual person akin to himself.

"Such is the religious consciousness; it is the

human consciousness endowed with the conviction that it is communicating with God." [1]

Persons who have experienced this communion with God remain unshakable as to the value of the evidence. They are persons of a somewhat mystical temperament, and their conviction cannot generally be imparted to rationalistic temperaments who, not having had personally the experience in question, can always treat it as an illusion or error. Although James affirms that by nature he cannot enter into the point of view of the mystics, and often has difficulty in understanding their testimony, he takes his stand nevertheless on their side, because he sees no reason, as a radical empiricist, to question immediate experiences so uniform and so prevalent through the whole history of humanity. The field of experience is too vast, and reality too rich and varied, for one single individual to pretend to embrace the whole of it himself; and where should we be if in other matters we relied only on what we ourselves have directly experienced? That is why, even while recognizing that

[1] E. Boutroux: *William James*. English translation, New York, 1912, p. 50.

mystical or religious experience has little that is convincing or "authoritative" for those to whom it has not been vouchsafed, James does not hesitate to consider it and on the whole to accept its testimony; the more so, perhaps, since this testimony squared entirely with his philosophy and with his personal inclinations.

You may well believe that in attributing religious phenomena to God's actual self-revelation James did not fail to bring upon himself much condemnation. The ultra-knowing have, in the name of science, raised two objections. Firstly, they say, it is in these days inadmissible to bring God, or anything supernatural or miraculous, into the course of mundane events, which, as every one knows, is governed solely by the general laws of nature. And secondly, they say that the facts adduced are drawn merely from the experience of devotees, and are easily explained by the discoveries of modern psycho-pathology in the field of subconscious phenomena; so that one must indeed be blinded by superstition to see anything at all divine in this medley of hallucinations, ecstasies, and morbid symptoms of all

kinds, which appear to fill the lives of religious persons.

This second objection scarcely holds good. For although James himself was one of the first to point out the rôle which subconsciousness plays in religion he nevertheless saw clearly that the ultimate problem remains untouched thereby. It is precisely through the subconscious, he says, that all these experiences of salvation *reach* the religious soul, and so on that fundamental fact religion and science quite agree.[1] But what is there then beyond the subconscious? Science is silent on this point; it cannot make sure. The subliminal is a conjurer's sack from which science has produced much, but

[1] It is interesting to note the close agreement in regard to the psychology of religion between two thinkers as original and independent of each other as were William James and the late Genevese theologian, César Malan (1821-1899). Before the discovery of subliminal psychology, and earlier than the American philosopher, Malan had come through independent reflection to consider the subconscious (which he called "the unconscious principle of our being") to be the direct source of all individual religious experience—from the simple feeling of moral obligation to the most esoteric experiences of the Christian life—and the necessary intermediary through which divine action makes itself felt in the personal consciousness. (*Cf.* G. Fulliquet: *La Pensée théologique de César Malan.* Robert, Geneva, 1902, p. 286.)

it cannot explore this sack to the bottom nor make sure that it has no hole which would allow the passage of strange forces. Here then religion does not contradict science, but only ventures beyond it with an hypothesis which assumes that the individual subliminals are continuous with a sphere of reality where they come in direct contact either with one another (as the phenomena of telepathy would seem to indicate) or with higher powers which are the real source of the inner experiences of the believer. These experiences become tinged or molded in different ways in their passage through the subliminal. Hence the personal modifications, so various and often indeed so pathological, which they have undergone by the time they enter consciousness, and which must not obscure the essential fact that nevertheless in these experiences the divine power is working to replenish and revive. James recognizes that this hypothesis of the super-individual origin of religious experience, which constitutes the common belief of all religions, is not a part of science; but neither is it, on the other hand, anti-scientific, thanks to the rôle of connecting link which from now on the subliminal plays be-

tween the observable phenomena and that of their inscrutable ultimate sources. It is accordingly permissible for every one to think about this as he pleases; just as, if he once admits this fundamental religious belief, it is further permissible for him to add to it his own *over-beliefs* concerning the more exact constitution of the divine world, at his own risk, of course, and without imposing them upon others.

As to the objection that it is inadmissible on principle to resort to "God" for the explanation of this or that particular occurrence, since everything takes places strictly according to natural laws,—this would apply to James's position if his God represented the "Absolute" or the first cause, as does the "universal Being" of monism, which, as the "one and only" source from which everything flows, could not manifest himself at certain junctures in the course of things rather than at others. But let us not forget that in James's pluralistic universe God is but an individual and finite being, and all spiritual realities are particular and concrete experiences, as is everything else that exists. The special interventions of the divinity in the

life of the believer, the miracles, in short the "crass" supernaturalism which James squarely acknowledges (as opposed to the "refined" supernaturalism of the idealistic monists in whose eyes God is equally revealed everywhere, which is equivalent to nowhere), all this, although it is simply scandalizing to the intellectualist mind, has nothing shocking about it for a philosophy that takes account only of experience. Why should not the divine realities, if they exist, intervene of their own accord in the human world, just as this latter intervenes in the world of animals? And as to the perennial "laws" of science it goes without saying that, for James as for all true empiricists, they are nothing more than abstract formulæ, save in the concrete instances where they find themselves realized. These laws merely approximately express the usual relations of things to one another, and the usual sequences, but in no sense do they represent a necessity hovering over reality to prevent its moving out of its accustomed grooves. The monistic dogma of the uniformity of events, or of the fatality of natural laws, loses all absolute authority in pluralism and in tychism, where it

falls to the level of a working hypothesis which is good only so long as it comes true, but is no shibboleth to oppose to any new evidence which may be presented by concrete facts.

There remains a last objection, but it is a wholly philosophical one. This is that the religious experience of the presence or influence of God within oneself would not prove his independent existence; for no one can step out of his own consciousness in order to ascertain whether there is anything beyond it, and one would strangely delude oneself in taking purely subjective experiences, no matter how vivid and impressive they may be, as proof of an external reality. This objection, which is raised by solipsistic idealism, is to be sure irrefutable, but since it strikes equally at our belief in the objective reality of our fellow-men and in fact of everything else whatsoever, including our own past, nobody takes it seriously (see above, page 105). William James, convinced realist that he was, had no more difficulty in accepting the objective existence of God than of anything else, from the moment that a genuine human experience bore witness thereto. And as for the mysterious nature of the inter-

action, or the more or less profound communion between the personality of the believer and that of the divinity, we have seen that this problem existed no more for the founder of radical empiricism than did the problem of the existence of individual streams of consciousness; for the relations, whether conjunctive or disjunctive, of beings to one another, do not have to be logically explained—to attempt which would be meaningless—but simply ascertained and reported as they appear in immediate experience.

In admitting the reality of God as attested by the facts, moreover, James did not pretend to have solved the whole mystery, and in view of our present ignorance he rather freely uses various expressions for God, such as the gods, the divine world, higher or invisible powers, the supersensible sphere, and other variants. But on one point he is certain,—that God is at the very least a conscious and a moral being, for it is thus that he reveals himself in the most marked cases of religious experience: and how, moreover, could it be otherwise in a pluralistic universe consisting entirely of individual existences? Can one conceive of anything more contrary to James's con-

crete method than the intellectualist mania, of the theologians and philosophers, for attenuating God until nothing is left but a general idea, a category such as the "good" or the "perfect," an impersonal and abstract law, or a moral order apart from human consciousness and floating in the æther of pure reason!

The question as to whether the divine personality is one, as monotheism asserts, or whether it is many, is one which James does not decide. If many, this need not be in the likeness of the pagan divinities, always warring with another, but it might be in the sense of a society or heirarchy of spiritual beings, living in perfect harmony although of diverse individualities and rank. James rather inclines toward the second alternative,[1] which is more in conformity with his pluralistic philosophy. And in any case, if God is one, he is neither infinite nor absolute (as he is for monism), but he is a finite consciousness, like ourselves except more comprehensive, outside of which there will always remain others to constitute an external environment to him.

[1] *Cf.* his lecture "Concerning Fechner" (*A Pluralistic Universe.* New York, 1909, Lecture IV, pp. 131-177).

"The ideal power with which we feel ourselves in connection, the 'God' of ordinary men, is, both by ordinary men and by philosophers, endowed with certain of those metaphysical attributes which in the lecture on philosophy I treated with such disrespect. He is assumed as a matter of course to be 'one and only' and to be 'infinite'; and the notion of many finite gods is one which hardly any one thinks it worth while to consider, and still less to uphold. Nevertheless, in the interests of intellectual clearness, I feel bound to say that religious experience, as we have studied it, cannot be cited as unequivocally supporting the infinitist belief. The only thing that it unequivocally testifies to is that we can experience union with *something* larger than ourselves and in that union find our greatest peace. Philosophy, with its passion for unity, and mysticism, with its monoideistic bent, both 'pass to the limit' and identify the something with a unique God who is the all-inclusive soul of the world. Popular opinion, respectful to their authority, follows the example which they set.

"Meanwhile the practical needs and experiences of religion seem to me sufficiently met by

the belief that beyond each man and in a fashion continuous with him there exists a larger power which is friendly to him and to his ideals. All that the facts require is that the power should be both other and larger than our conscious selves. Anything larger will do, if only it be large enough to trust for the next step. It need not be infinite, it need not be solitary. It might conceivably even be only a larger and more god-like self, of which the present self would then be but the mutilated expression, and the universe might conceivably be a collection of such selves, of different degrees of inclusiveness, with no absolute unity realized in it at all. Thus would a sort of polytheism return upon us, . . . which, by the way, has always been the real religion of common people, and is so still to-day." [1]

This polytheism of James's may have scandalized some people; but it must be remembered that he insists only that it is an hypothesis which is perfectly reconcilable with the facts of religious experience, and this particularly in order to show how permeated the current doctrines are

[1] *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* New York, 1902, pp. 524-526.

by useless monistic and intellectualistic metaphysics. It is doubtless for the same reason that he explicitly says that he cannot accept "popular Christianity" and agrees rather with the Buddhistic doctrine according to which the moral order of the world resides in the facts themselves, every one of our actions carrying with it its own reason and its own sanction just as every cause produces, inevitably, its effect. It is clear that this way of understanding the deep moral significance of the universe is much more in keeping with James's concrete and realistic habit than is our traditional view as embodied in the Catechism, where the great moral facts are deduced from the cosmic drama of the creation, fall, atonement, last judgment, etc.; events taking place in who knows what abstract sphere, so remote is it from the concrete scene of our daily lives. But it is none the less evident that our philosopher's religious moralism with its infusion of heroism, enthusiasm, and energy, and his belief in a personal God, are utterly different from the subdued, resigned, and completely atheistic attitude of authentic Buddhism.

I do not hesitate to describe James's person-

ality and philosophy as purely Christian in spirit, although in spite of his sympathy for every sincere and living faith his dislike of formulæ caused him to remain uncommitted to any of the orthodox and established creeds. He often uses the expression "we Christians," and the manner in which he describes and appreciates saintliness and the religious life shows how well he understood the deeper emotions of the great figures of Christianity.

Finally, although James's philosophical ideas are certainly far removed from those of ordinary theologians, they are in at least as good, and are often in much better accord with the spirit of the Scriptures. Was not Christ in a sense the first pragmatist when he declared that "by their fruits ye shall know them," and that the truth of his doctrine was to be judged by putting it in practice? Did he ever treat the problem of evil other than pluralistically; quite as James treats it? Surely Christ did not teach that God is an "Absolute" that includes and condones all the evils and miseries of this world, but rather that He is the Father, the great Ally who desires our welfare and who demands only our co-operation

in resisting and casting out all evil. If you reflect a moment, I think you will at once recognize that James's theism remains true in fundamentals to evangelical theism, although it is obviously at variance with those ideas of God that are found among average church-goers. It would be elaborating the obvious to dwell longer on the justification of views which, heterodox as they are, have been so ably supported among us a few years ago by so notable a Christian as Wilfred Monod.[1]

In leaving this subject I would point out once more that the great idea which dominates James's religious moralism,—that human effort and divine power must collaborate for the salvation of the world,—is after all no more than a development of the thought of the apostle: "we are laborers together with God."

[1] W. Monod: *Un Athée, Contribution à la réforme d'une certaine idée de Dieu.* St.-Blaise, 1904. Arguing from the autobiography of Jefferies (1883) and from other cases, Monod comes to reject the traditional ideas of the omnipresence and omnipotence of God and comes out with conceptions that are quite akin to those of James.

X

THE WILL TO BELIEVE

Some one may suggest here that although James's moral and religious philosophy is certainly a very elevated one, yet in spite of its great merits it is, after all, in the same case with all other philosophical systems. None of them can ever be completely demonstrated: they remain hypotheses and more or less fictions.

Of course James has not deceived himself in this respect. He did not profess to "demonstrate" the truth of his conception of the world. Every man possesses, he believed, some fundamental attitude towards the universe and life, some individual way of feeling and of reacting, which is his philosophy. It is only with a few that this attitude or this vision of things is precise enough to translate itself into ideas or definite formulæ. It is, in short, only in rare and specially organized minds that this work of intellectual elaboration grows into a coherent system,

that is, a reasoned structure of doctrine. However highly perfected they may be, these rational constructions that are known as philosophic systems are still only secondary products derived from our primitive and spontaneous intuition. This inarticulate intuition comes first, but soon learns to protect itself under the guise of an articulate philosophy. Now this armor is neither flawless nor in itself a source of power. The primitive and spontaneous attitude, the inner intuitive resolve, the *will to believe*, is always required to make a vital personal conviction and certainty out of what, from a strictly logical point of view, would be only desideratum and hypothesis.

The will to believe! To have recognized this element in every philosophy and to have proclaimed its legitimacy against all who disputed or deprecated it is, in my opinion, the greatest service which James has done us. It is also one of the most inspired observations that have gone into the structure of pragmatism.

To the mind of intellectualist thinkers nothing could be more foolish or disastrous than to assign to faith and to volition (notoriously

at the service of personal interest, desire, passion and, in short, of the most subjective elements of our nature) any part whatever in the elaboration of philosophy, whose goal is the purely objective and impersonal ascertainment of truth. Rationalists or positivists are all of one accord in condemning faith, which is merely the belief in something which we deeply need and for which we hope, is, in short, aspiration. Even if this aspiration and this anticipation should be ultimately justified, they are none the less declared illegitimate, and unworthy of any enlightened being. Huxley maintained that one should never admit anything not prescribed by reason, and he considered any form of faith to be a moral delinquency. If a belief, said Clifford, has been accepted without purely intellectual and conclusive proof, the satisfaction we take in it is a piece of self-indulgence, an infidelity to the human intellect, and a relapse into superstition. In short, it is bad at any time, anywhere, and for any one, to entertain a belief on insufficient evidence.

You see we are forbidden to let our preferences or even our noblest aspirations influence our be-

liefs. Science alone must determine these. There is something imposing in this jealous care with which the intellectualists reserve to ratiocination, quite to the exclusion of Pascal's " reasons of the heart," the sole right to participate in framing our conception of the universe. But you may rest assured that James, having discovered that intellectualism always leads its partisans, when they are logical, to skeptical or monistic conclusions which are conspicuously unfavorable to the moral and religious life, devoted himself to refuting this point of view. He does this with his usual intrepidity and vigor by borrowing from the intellectualists their own weapons, that is to say, by convicting them of self-contradiction, and showing that their means of getting at truth exposes them to the risk of missing it altogether:

You assert that we ought to believe only what we can demonstrate; but where have you ever found or given a demonstration of this principle itself? That is merely a prejudice like any other, dictated by your personal preference, your purely subjective sentiment, and, namely, by your *fear of error* which surpasses your *desire for truth.* Unquestionably, if our first human duty

were to avoid falling into error, you would be right, and we ought to hold nothing as true which has not first been perfectly established. But if it is our destiny to do everything we can to arrive at truth, even at the risk of making mistakes, then your rule presents itself as a fatal hindrance.

Furthermore, is it not insincere to advocate a rule whose application would obviously make for the paralysis of scientific research, human enterprise, and progress? Where is the scholar, the statesman, the man of affairs, or the private citizen who does not every day, even at the risk of disappointment, speculate on the future; who does not indeed live by faith, relying on facts as yet unproved and believing firmly in the success of his experiments and undertakings? And how many doubtful and obscure predicaments there are in which we are forced to take sides, and in which the mere act of withholding our support from one of two undemonstrable hypotheses amounts to favoring the other one exactly as much as if we had actually embraced it! Our moral and social life constantly subjects us to this choice. How are we to judge questions of value, that is to say questions of what *ought* to

be, if we insist on restricting ourselves to the verdicts of science which inform us only concerning what *is?* And in the end does not science itself rest on purely sentimental motives? The most positivist scholars are assuredly governed by "reasons of the heart" when they lay down the law that the verification of facts and the correction of false ideas constitute for man the highest good; for if you question this doctrine, they cannot prove but will only reassert it. At the very best they may point out that verification and correction lead always to results which gratify man's needs, once more, *of the heart.*

Finally, this unfortunate caveat which is put on faith rests on the intellectualist supposition of a finished universe, independent of ourselves, of which we can only take passive cognizance and in which our initiative is futile. But this is an unfounded supposition, and is indeed refuted by innumerable cases in which faith creates its own object and contributes toward its own realization. The mountain climber facing a terrible crevasse may succeed in jumping it if he *believes* that he can, but he will surely fall short and be dashed to pieces, or else starve to death at the

brink, if he *doubts* his own strength. In the same way any one takes a risk who puts confidence in a stranger, but at the same time one stands the chance of making a friend of some one who, except for one's own overtures, would always have remained unfeeling and indifferent. Perhaps it is the same with this universe. What we hope and believe of it together with what our beliefs, even the philosophical ones, inspire us to set to work to accomplish, is unquestionably a part of its reality. But do such parts figure as passive factors with no influence on the rest, or rather are they not like an active ferment working to leaven the entire mass and contributing to shape its future? The intellectualists do not hesitate to accept the former hypothesis, and yet it is very far from being proved; and if the second should be the true one, they would some day come to see that, paralyzed by their own theory, they had deprived themselves of all active participation in the process of molding reality.

It is accordingly by a flagrant begging of the question, or else by an unjustifiable bias, that intellectualism would forbid our believing in anything beyond the known. Not only, as a matter

of fact, is voluntary belief practised without misgivings by the very ones who would forbid it to others, but it is in fact indispensable to all progress; and when the essential nature of the universe is in question, the act of faith is the more legitimate in that it may itself contribute to determine this nature. Besides, it goes without saying that in this domain of the unproved every man is free to form his own opinions on his own responsibility, even though he may some day find himself to have been in error.

But it is exactly this mental freedom which alarms the strict doctrinaires. This amounts, they say, to allowing people to believe what they wish! And this would open wide the door to superstition, to the worst abuses of libertarianism, and to every form of licentiousness. James does not deny these possible dangers but he is not daunted by them, knowing well that humanity makes progress only by much groping and at the cost of innumerable false starts. We should get nowhere without these tentative experiments, from which experience makes its selection and saves only what is found to be valuable. How many once flourishing philosophical and religious

hypotheses have perished with time, like the gods of Olympus and the tortures of hell! We must not, then, fear freedom; mistakes and excesses automatically correct themselves in the great test of time.

I need hardly say, after the preceding chapters, that it is in favor of the live religious hypothesis, in the broadest yet most practical sense of the term, that James exercises this inalienable right to choose that which he will hold to be true. "I, therefore, for one," he says, "cannot see my way to accepting the agnostic rules for truth-seeking, or wilfully agree to keep my willing nature out of the game." And so his phrase *will to believe* becomes almost synonymous with *religious faith*. He means by it an assent that is not purely platonic and intellectual, but decided, enthusiastic and practical,—an assent to the reality of a divine power which has the same moral ideal as we, and which needs our coöperation in working toward the salvation of the world. This religious belief, this volitional as well as intellectual choice, is the only one which gives our life a worthy aim and a significance, or can awaken in us that "strenuous mood" without which life

would lose all pungency. And James believes that this faith is of such vital importance to the universe, as well as to ourselves, that nobody should be for a moment deterred by the arbitrary veto imposed by intellectualist philosophers.

"This feeling, forced on us we know not whence, that by obstinately believing that there are gods (although not to do so would be so easy both for our logic and our life) we are doing the universe the deepest service we can, seems part of the living essence of the religious hypothesis . . . When I look at the religious question as it really puts itself to concrete men, and when I think of all the possibilities which both practically and theoretically it involves, then this command that we shall put a stopper on our heart, instincts, and courage, and *wait*—acting of course meanwhile more or less as if religion were *not* true—till doomsday, or till such time as our intellect and senses working together may have raked in evidence enough,—this command, I say, seems to me the queerest idol ever manufactured in the philosophic cave . . . Since belief is measured by action, he who forbids us to believe religion to be true necessarily also for-

bids us to act as we should if we did believe it to be true." [1]

"What the more characteristically divine facts are, apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and the prayer-state, I know not. But the over-belief on which I am ready to make my personal venture is that they exist . . . By being faithful in my poor measure to this over-belief, I seem to myself to keep more sane and true . . . Who knows whether the faithfulness of individuals here below to their own poor over-beliefs may not actually help God in turn to be more effectively faithful to his own greater tasks?" [2]

"I confess that I do not see why the very existence of an invisible world may not in part depend on the personal response which any one of us may make to the religious appeal. God himself, in short, may draw vital strength and increase of very being from our fidelity. For my own part, I do not know what the sweat and blood and tragedy of this life may mean, if they

[1] *The Will to Believe.* New York, 1903, pp. 29-30.

[2] *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* New York, 1902, p. 519.

mean anything short of this. If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals from which one may withdraw at will. But it *feels* like a real fight,—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem; and first of all to redeem our own hearts from atheisms and fears. For such a half-wild, half-saved universe our nature is adapted." [1]

These few quotations, and I could multiply them indefinitely, will show the value which James sets on religious faith, and the importance he assigns to a persistent and heroic attitude of determination. I hold that this point is perhaps the most important in all his philosophy for intellectual men (I do not say intellectualists!), and that there is nothing for which we owe him deeper gratitude than for the emphasis which he puts on the will to believe, supported as this is by his own personal example. Let me amplify this a bit further. The cultivated minds of our day can be roughly divided as regards religion

[1] *The Will to Believe*, p. 61.

into three categories. First, there are the privileged souls. Thanks to their naturally religious temperaments and to the favorable concurrence of circumstance (often tragic) they have been granted intimate experiences of a more or less mystical order, which bring them "absolute certitude." They have experienced the direct intervention of God in their own lives. Henceforth, whatever befalls, they are safe from doubt and one can almost say they walk, not by faith but by sight. They are greatly to be envied.

At the other extreme are to be found those positive minds who are entirely immersed in the daily humdrum and for whom the science or the business of this world is all-sufficing. Sometimes aggressive, sometimes indifferent toward the faith of others, to them religion is a dead issue, a question which is disposed of as being among the superstitions of the past. They, too, are safe from doubt. They are greatly to be pitied.

Between these two extremes is the great mass, to which most of us probably belong, for whom the religious problem is always there, and is, at times, more or less poignant. We would fain find a stable and satisfying solution. But we never

reach it, torn as we are between allegiance to the faith of our fathers, and also to the modern ideal of scientific certitude from which we cannot free ourselves, and to which the old answers and *apologiæ*, so satisfying to our forebears, are unfortunately no longer adequate.

Consider the Christian tenets in which we have been brought up. On the one hand, we vaguely feel the inestimable value of their content, and all that the individual, society, and civilization at large would lose in exchanging them for materialistic and atheistic free-thought. On the other hand, we no longer know just how far to credit the documents, claiming to be historic, on which they rest. In the face of our many scientific discoveries,—from the "higher criticism" of the Scriptures to, say, paleontology and embryology which are constantly reinforcing the purely naturalistic conception of the universe,—the authority of the Scriptural tradition seems singularly shaken, nor can we in any degree foretell how much of it will survive. It is possible, to be sure, that our descendants may finally recover their religious attitude, in case another turn of the wheel of science restores our confidence (through

new discoveries or interpretations) on points which are questioned to-day. But until that day comes, and it may never come, we are in a tight place. We are indeed told that there are moral considerations which dominate all others; but the evidence in questions of morals often seems exceedingly obscure. And we feel that there is, above all, the further question of sincerity: assuredly we would gladly enough go where our hearts lead us and embrace the Christian faith; but to believe is to affirm to be true, and it will always be repugnant to the conscience of an honest man, above all if he has been at all influenced by the scientific method, to affirm as true things of which he is uncertain, and which he is not in a position to demonstrate. Such is the dilemma in which we find ourselves.

Well, it is just here that William James comes to our aid, and places the religious question on its true ground by showing us that the essence of faith is not feeling or intellect, but will. It is not a question of lacking sincerity or of allowing oneself to affirm as true things of which one is uncertain; but it is a question of *willing* something whose reality has been and as yet can be,

scientifically, neither proved nor refuted. It is not, then, a question of sincerity but of calling things by their right names, not of saying that one knows when one does not know, but of frankly recognizing that one *wills;* and that though one may be wrong, one is quite resolved to take the risk. Feeling, then, is nothing but the starting point of an *act* of faith, and intellect is merely one of its instruments; the act of faith itself, the will to believe, is something *sui generis* which pertains to neither the one nor the other. Thus it might happen, for instance, that in spite of the suspicious behavior of a lifelong friend, and the apparently well-founded accusations against him, we should still trust our inner feeling, and decide to hold him innocent until he was absolutely proved guilty; and to guarantee his probity even though he might later be proved guilty and we be forced to acknowledge ourselves duped. In another domain and on a different scale this is the attitude of religious faith toward the universe. Faith steadfastly trusts the universe in spite of its enveloping mystery and its threatening aspects, and persists in crediting life with a deep moral significance. It resolutely confides in the

divine being whom it presages, and goes ahead, taking the risk and prepared to pay in person. It is a true *parti pris*, in the best sense of the word, as the late Ernest Martin said, whose point of view here coincides entirely with that of James.[1]

What is your objection to this voluntary resolve which religion demands of us? That you do not wish to take the chance of being deceived, or risk having believed and acted in vain? So be it. No power constrains you; religion *is* precisely an affair of free personal choice. But while yourself taking a stand that is inwardly and outwardly opposed to it (since neutrality is practically impossible) you must not reproach those who have decided in favor of it with lacking either sincerity or a scientific spirit (for these two things are no longer in question), but only with *willing* differently from yourself. Such a reproach, surely, would be narrow and intolerant.

Accordingly, if we are not of those privileged ones to whom God's reality has been made mani-

[1] Ernest Martin: *La Foi chrétienne est-elle un parti-pris?* Lausanne, 1892.

fest through mystical experiences, thanks to their having a subconsciousness peculiarly permeable to His influence, we are not for that reason deprived of all religion: there remains the religion of the will. When vision fails us we have the right to believe, that is, resolutely to choose in favor of the existence, behind all the scientifically insoluble riddles of this world, of a spiritual principle at work in the universe,—a power whose triumph we hope for. It matters little what name we give to it. What does matter is that we should be faithful to this principle in all our thought and conduct. Whenever the occasion arises in which the existence or the non-existence of God would bear importantly on our decision, it should be upon the first alternative that we take our stand. There is no lack of such occasions: at every hour of the day, James said, life confronts us with them and puts us to the proof, in the smallest things as in the greatest, in the realm of theory as well as in that of practice; and the responses which our conscience makes to them, our tacit consents and refusals, constitute the very touchstone both of our morality and also of our religion.

Perhaps you will feel that for creatures as weak as we are, the will alone is a fragile and precarious base upon which to rear the religious life; that we should need to be superlative heroes indeed to believe blindly and without proofs. But this would be to forget two things: First, as I said above (p. 178), this gospel of voluntary faith, is not addressed, of course, to people who regard religion as a dead issue, but only to those for whom it is still a tenable hypothesis, which finds an echo in their own native aspirations, desires, and "reasons of the heart." It is not a question, then, of their believing in something which makes no instinctive appeal or is even repugnant to them, but simply a question of taking their stand for an alternative which, though it is not absolutely accepted by the intellect, appeals to them profoundly. This is why, although the effort required of them by religious faith is often difficult and sometimes heroic, it is nevertheless nothing superhuman since it is the reply to an inner call which is already making itself heard, however feebly, in the depth of their nature. In the second place, we are so made that if belief expresses itself in deeds, deeds on their

side engender and reinforce belief.[1] Habit becomes second nature. Let yourself think and act as if spiritual values were an illusion, moral obligations and ideals merely fantastic, and you will soon find yourself more and more the slave of your skepticism. On the contrary, said James, make every day a small sacrifice to "God," and to "Duty," and soon these two words, unsubstantial as they at first appeared to you to be, will be transformed into living realities. The *act* of voluntary faith, upon being repeated, tends to produce a *state* of faith which is the beginning of sight; and religion, from being at first a simple hypothesis, accepted and practised as a *parti pris*, ends by illuminating one's whole existence, and bringing with it the intimate evidence and joyous conviction of its truth. This does not

[1] I recall, in passing, that in James's psychology (as also in certain respects in Renouvier's) the terms Will, Belief, Reality are correlative and intimately connected. James has shown that the various processes designated in ordinary life by such terms as *to pay attention, to believe, to will, to perceive a reality*, are essentially identical and always consist in the firm and unshakable retention in the focus of consciousness, and at the cost of a more or less considerable mental effort, of an idea, image, or other psychic datum, until it *prevails* and dominates our thought and conduct.

mean, however, that we may dispense with effort, energy, and perseverence on our own part, for these constitute our own necessary contribution toward the development of our religious life.

James's famous essay on the "Will to Believe" and all his other writings are filled with the idea of the profoundly active and voluntary nature of religious faith. He has been most unjustly reproached, sometimes even by psychologists,[1] with having, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, misunderstood and caricatured true piety by representing it as a nervous disease. It is true that if one read certain chapters of this work superficially, one might sometimes think that the author made all religion turn on mystical experiences which spring from the subconscious

[1] Although William James, says Stanley Hall, is perhaps the most brilliant littérateur and stylist in philosophy since Schopenhauer . . . his method (in the psychology of religion) seems to do violence to fact. "Most of the cases and experiences which constitute so large a part of his volume are abnormal and some teratological, from which true religion, I believe, saves its followers. These pathological varieties of religious experience can explain piety itself no more than the mental and physical freaks of hysteria explain true womanhood, the Wiertz Museum explain art, or the effects of music on the insane show its real nature." (Stanley Hall: *Adolescence*. New York, 1904, Vol. II, pp. 292-293, note.)

and overwhelm the subject; and since it is among the psychopathic cases that these obsessive phenomena are most marked, it is from them that James has taken his most striking examples, morbid though they are. This explains the somewhat unfavorable impression that this volume has made upon some readers. "It is enough to disgust one with religion," said one, "to have it represented by such a collection of abnormalities."

These criticisms are, as a matter of fact, but a further testimony to James's sincerity and exactitude of observation. For it was no fault of his if as a matter of fact the authentic religious life, empirically attested by heroic virtues and all the marks of holiness which it confers, sometimes develops in degenerate temperaments, even as the most beautiful flowers sometimes grow on the dunghill. When James cites cases which his scandalized readers would have referred straight to the hospital or the insane asylum, it is because he knew enough to make the distinction, which escapes them, between the pure diamond of religious experience and its matrix, so to speak, which is often pathological. Furthermore, even

in the volume in question (which, after all, shocks only by reason of its broad impartiality and its rare comprehension of the most diverse types of mind) one finds James's fundamental idea everywhere implied and in the last pages explicitly stated: this is that the essence of religion lies in the will. For in all his cases he has insisted on the condition that those who, whether balanced or unbalanced, have had revelations from on high, shall have responded with some act of obedience, of personal and practical renunciation, or of voluntary self-surrender; without which they would not have been, in James's eyes, true religious examples.

We may then say in summing up that, with or without mystical experiences, it is invariably the inner resolve of the individual, his consecration to ideal realities, his obstinate prejudice in favor of the divine, in short, it is the *will to believe* which constitutes for James the very essence of religious faith and true piety.

XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In order to enter truly into a philosopher's thought, said James, it is less necessary to know the details of his system than it is to grasp his point of view, and see with his vision. This is very true. But if it is never easy to put one's self in another's place, it becomes particularly difficult when this other is so rich, complex, and unusual a personality as William James. His mind and heart worked so thoroughly in harmony that he should have attained, one feels, an equally harmonious vision of things and one, therefore, which it would be easy to describe. But the things themselves are so transitory, chaotic, and difficult to comprehend in one view, save at the cost of arbitrary simplification, that the more penetrating and sincere the onlooker is, the more he is struck by the complication of the spectacle, and the less likely he is to arrive at a truly synthetic vision of reality. This is the case with

James. One might say, allusively, that his philosophy no more constitutes a *sys-tem*, that is to say an ensemble of organically articulated ideas, than the world constitutes a *uni-verse*, that is to say an ensemble of realities combined into a coherent whole.

In James's vision of things, two aspects can be distinguished: on the one hand his popular philosophy (I mean his altogether moral and religious manner of looking at life and the world)[1]; on the other his opinions as a professional philosopher on the problems of methodology and metaphysics. Let us consider the latter first:

I. In his more technical writings, the point of view has gradually changed with time, or rather progressed steadily in one direction, and that is toward an ever more radical empiricism. At

[1] One must not misunderstand the expression "popular philosophy." It does not mean, in connection with James, philosophy cheapened, adapted to the masses and more or less distorted; but simply philosophy cleared of technical subtleties and so presented that every one can understand and live by it. Now since, for James, immediate experience is much more true and real than the generalizations of the armchair philosophers, it follows that for him popular philosophy is the genuine philosophy, the only one that humanly and seriously counts.

the outset of his career—when the study of Renouvier freed him from the superstitions of deterministic monism—while retaining his preference for the concrete method of immediate experience, he for some time shared the firm belief of the French philosopher in the value of pure logic and the certainty of conclusions founded on the principles of identity and contradiction.[1] But little by little his inborn distrust of everything abstract, purely deductive, and incapable of verification, got the upper hand, and we have seen that he finally gave up the desire to get a ra-

[1] For instance, since every *number* is *finite,* Renouvier concluded that it is contradictory and consequently impossible for the past to be infinite either in time or in number of details; from which results the conclusion that it has not always existed, but that it sprang from nothingness at a certain moment. And if it was created by God, it is by the same logical necessity certain that God, too, has not been always existent in the past, but that He at some time began to exist. (Eternity, in the future, on the contrary, offers no difficulty since its infinity is never achieved, but consists in a series of moments which increases indefinitely, and this implies no contradiction.) This "principle of number," from which it follows that the *completed infinite is contradictory,* as Renouvier said, plays a fundamental rôle in all the reasonings of this thinker. See, for instance, the excellent little work on Renouvier by Ph. Bridel: *Charles Renouvier et sa philosophie.* Lausanne, 1905.

tional or unified comprehension of the data of experience, but confined himself to ascertaining what these data are (see pp. 107-108). This was not destined greatly to modify his vision of reality; which appeared to him as only the more extraordinarily abundant and diversified, defying all the rigid and closed systems of intellectualist philosophers by its inexhaustible richness and its perpetual creation of novelty. The only difference is that while he had previously believed one could successfully comprehend it by the necessary laws of thought, just as Renouvier believed, he now saw that just this is impossible, that our concepts are unable to seize the real *becoming* of things, and that these overwhelmingly transcend the power of logic. We cannot dream of confining them in any theoretical formula, and the only way of getting at them is to plunge directly into the living flux of experience.

This renunciation of every effort to grasp reality by logic seems to have had the effect of still further emancipating James's spirit. One might say that he had glimpsed the possibility of reconciling, on the common ground of immediate experience, philosophical doctrines which had

seemed to him, until then, absolutely incompatible.

Allow me, apropos of this, to give a recollection which may interest some of you, for it concerns a remark which James made over twenty years ago about the great philosopher, Charles Secrétan. He, as you know, was a worthy brother-in-arms of Renouvier in the defense of free-will and the rights of the moral life, in the midst of the materialistic and positivistic current of the second half of the nineteenth century. But there was a great difference between them. Educated in the school of mathematics, Renouvier brought to these philosophical questions a severity and dryness which often repelled the deeply religious and likewise mystical mind of Secrétan. Nothing shows this better than their difference upon the fundamental principle of ethics, which was for Renouvier justice, and for Secrétan love. At the level which these two lofty thinkers had reached it amounted to practically the same thing, for love and justice upon such a plane imply each other, as two inseparable aspects of one ideal; so that there was actually nothing but a question of words between them. Yet how in-

dicative this was of their temperamental differences! To take one further example: when Renouvier demonstrated by his principle of number, that God had begun to exist at a given moment, previous to which there had been nothing at all, Secrétan was scandalized by such a rigorous application of logic to the Supreme Being, and dissented utterly, preferring to think of the omnipotence of God as enshrouded in the inscrutable mystery of first things.

To return to James, I once brought to his attention a critical study which Secrétan had just published on the philosophy of Renouvier,[1] and after reading this criticism James made the following comments: "I am much obliged to you for the paper by Secrétan. . . . It is much too oracular and brief, but its *pregnancy* is a good example of what an intellect gains by growing old: one says vast things simply. I read it

[1] Ch. Secrétan: *Note sur le Néo-Criticisme.* Lausanne, 1892. (Reprinted from the *Recueil inaugural de l'Université de Lausanne.*) In 1892, as James, after having spent the summer in Switzerland, was leaving with his family for the Italian lakes and Florence, I sent him the reprint that I had just received. A few days later (September 18, 1892) he wrote from Pallanza the letter from which I here quote.

stretched on the grass of Monte Motterone, the Righi of this region, just across the lake, with all the kingdoms of the Earth stretched before me, and I realized how exactly a philosophic *Weltansicht* resembles that from the top of a mountain. You are driven, as you ascend, into a choice of fewer and fewer paths, and at last you end in two or three simple attitudes from each of which we see a great part of the Universe amazingly simplified and summarized, but nowhere the entire view at once. I entirely agree that Renouvier's system fails to satisfy, but it seems to me the classical and consistent expression of *one* of the great attitudes, that of insisting on logically intelligible formulas. If one goes beyond, one must abandon the hope of *formulas* altogether, which is what all pious sentimentalists do; and with them M. Secrétan, since he fails to give any articulate substitute for the "Criticism" he finds so unsatisfactory. Most philosophers give formulas, and inadmissible ones, as when Secrétan makes a *mémoire sans oubli* = *duratio tota simul* = *eternity!*" You see how squarely and positively William James at this time rejected Secrétan's strictures on Renou-

vier's logical rigor.[1] What a change there was between that time and the day, sixteen years later, when he publicly repudiated this same method of Renouvier in his lectures at Oxford.

The volume containing these Oxford lectures shows many a sign of this conciliatory tendency, which became more marked the more he became the convinced champion of immediate experience, and the more completely he rejected the conceptual method as incapable of rendering an account of the actual flux of things. Even the change of title which this volume [2] underwent in being translated into French is characteristic in this respect. Before the Oxford idealists, those ardent champions of the Absolute, James wished to ex-

[1] Nevertheless this did not at all prevent James from keenly appreciating the moral and religious inspiration of Secrétan, since he quoted from him four years later (1896) his formulation of the fundamental religious hypothesis: Religion "says that the best things are the more eternal things, the overlapping things, the things in the universe that throw the last stone, so to speak, and say the final word. 'Perfection is eternal'—this phrase of Charles Secrétan seems a good way of putting this first affirmation of religion, an affirmation which obviously cannot yet be verified scientifically at all." (*The Will to Believe.* New York, 1908, p. 25.)

[2] *A Pluralistic Universe.* New York, 1909.

pound his pluralistic conception of the universe clearly and persuasively; hence the original title —*A Pluralistic Universe:* but, in fact, what he discovered in them turned out to be not so much their monism as their intellectualism, their hollow rationalistic method. In contrast to this, therefore, he decided to lay more emphasis than he had originally planned on the only philosophical method which he recognized as valid,—the appeal to concrete experience: hence the later title in French—*Philosophie de l'expérience.*[1] It is significant that in his concluding paragraphs he appears to have become indifferent, whether the conclusions to be drawn by his hearers are going to favor monism or pluralism, provided that they are based on the concrete facts of life.[2]

The same characteristic stands out in the sympathetic manner in which James came latterly to interpret Hegel, the philosopher who formerly

[1] Published in Paris, 1910.

[2] ". . . if you can gather philosophic conclusions of any kind, monistic or pluralistic, from the *particulars of life,* I will say, as I now do say, with the cheerfullest of hearts, 'Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes, but ring the fuller minstrel in.'" (*A Pluralistic Universe,* p. 331.) Compare above, p. 24, note.

had irritated him most. Unquestionably Hegel's dialectic always seemed to him a deplorable intellectual aberration, but an aberration which he now indulgently looks on as a simple perversity of expression behind which is hidden a true and profound vision of a changing reality, a lively appreciation of that perpetual becoming in which things are so often transformed into their contraries. Likewise when James becomes enthusiastic about two thinkers who are as different from each other as Fechner [1] and Bergson, it is because he has been captivated by their intuitive and concrete way of seeing, so rich, so full of facts, in short so "thick," that he was led to overlook

[1] G. T. Fechner (1801-1887) had been long known to James as the founder of psychophysics, that science which seeks to measure the intensity of sensations in terms of their stimuli. James never had set great value upon this kind of research, whose exactitude he admired but which he looked upon as rather useless and without interest for a psychology of any but the most pedantic sort. It was much later, in fact only a few months before his lectures at Oxford, that he paid more careful attention to the philosophic works of Fechner, and became straightway enthusiastic over them. He wrote me on January 3, 1908, "I have just read the first half of Fechner's *Zend Avesta*, a wonderful book, by a wonderful genius. He had his vision and he knew how to discuss it, as no one's vision ever was discussed."

many of their metaphysical tendencies which were but little in harmony with his own.

In fine, one feels that James became more and more indulgent towards all possible philosophies, so long as they were anti-rationalistic and were derived, not from intellectual abstractions, but from contact with life and from the vital depths of personal experience.

Perhaps this is the place to say a word concerning the intellectual relationship between James and Bergson. It has often been pointed out that a striking analogy exists between the radical empiricism of the former and the intuitionism of the latter,—especially in the conception of consciousness as a continuous stream constituting reality itself, but one which the intellect distorts for practical ends by solidifying it and cutting it up into distinct and static fragments. In regard to this fundamental similarity, the question of priority has been very unwisely raised, and certain French writers have gone so far as to say that Bergson had preceded James in this new way of looking at things. They have even asserted that "Bergson's very original philosophy is not without affinity with that of William

James and C. S. Peirce, but far from being derived from them it preceded them."[1] Heaven preserve me from my friends! Bergson must have exclaimed when he read this, for it is hard to see how the Bergsonian philosophy, which was first advanced in 1889,[2] can have preceded the ideas which Peirce had published more than ten years before, and translated in the *Revue Philosophique* of January, 1879. And as for James it is true that his great work[3] appeared one year later than Bergson's book, but to cite this fact as has lately been done[4] in order to dispute his priority is to forget his earlier writings, notably his celebrated article of 1884,[5] which already contained all the essentials of his theory of the stream of consciousness. (Some persons have even thought they recognized the germ of Bergson's *Donneés immédiates* in this article; but

[1] J. Bourdeau: *Nouvelles modes en Philosophie.* Feuilleton in the *Journal des Débats,* Feb. 26, 1907.

[2] H. Bergson: *Essai sur les Données immédiates de la Conscience.* Paris, 1889.

[3] W. James: *The Principles of Psychology.* New York, 1890, 2 vols.

[4] A. Chaumeix: "William James." *Revue des Deux Mondes* of Oct. 15th, 1910, p. 850.

[5] W. James: "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology. *Mind* Vol. IX, pp. 1-26 (Jan., 1884).

Bergson has categorically denied having known about this article when he prepared his book.[1]) As a matter of fact, then, the priority by several years belongs indisputably to James.[2]

But how idle to raise a question of this sort in connection with two such philosophers! What would it matter if Bergson *had* been inspired by the subconscious memory of James's articles? Many others have read them and their reading seems to have borne little fruit. In philosophy it is the ground on which seeds fall that largely counts, for seeds are everywhere and after all a seed is not the full-grown tree. And let us not forget, after all, that James (who concerned himself with questions of priority only in order to give others their just dues)[3] made a handsome

[1] *Cf. Revue Philosophique,* t. LX, p. 229, note (Aug., 1905).

[2] H. M. Kallen: *William James and Henri Bergson.* Chicago, 1914, p. 38 *et seq.*

[3] There are authors who almost never cite their predecessors; so that they appear to have derived from their own inner consciousness all the ideas which they propound —*prolem sine matre creatam.* James went to the other extreme. With excessive scrupulousness he always names the persons from whom he thinks he may have borrowed anything, so that the notes at the foot of his pages are a perfect répertoire of the best that has been published on the subject he is treating.

acknowledgment to Bergson for stimulation and encouragement toward taking the last step in the direction of anti-intellectualism.[1]

Now, would James have followed his colleague of the Institute further than this point of method, and have embraced the Bergsonian metaphysics entire? We do not know. But it is doubtful, for it is hard to see how, without self-contradiction, James could have accepted the essentially mon-

[1] *Cf. A Pluralistic Universe.* New York, 1909, Chapter VI, "Bergson and his Critique of Intellectualism." Here James states that it was Bergson's philosophy which "had led me personally to renounce the intellectualistic method and the current notion that logic is an adequate measure of what can or cannot be." A few quotations from James's letters will show with what delight he had read Bergson's books, and what an important place he attributed to them in the anti-rationalistic movement of contemporary thought. On Jan. 27th, 1913, he writes, "I have been re-reading Bergson's books [*Données immédiates, Matière et mémoire*], and nothing that I have read since years has so excited and stimulated my thought. . . . I am sure that that philosophy has a great future; it breaks through old *cadres* and brings things into a solution from which new crystals can be got." And on Oct. 4th, 1908, when he had received, in London, a visit from Bergson: "So modest and unpretending a man, but such a genius intellectually! I have the strongest suspicions that the tendency which he has brought to a focus, will end by prevailing, and that the present epoch will be a sort of turning point in the history of philosophy. So many things converge towards an anti-rationalistic crystallization. *Qui vivra verra!*"

istic conception implied in the "*élan vital originel*" from which Bergson believes the whole universe arises by the differentiating process of evolution.[1] Nothing could be more contrary to that conception of the universe which James always held; he believed in a primordial chaos without trace either of unity, order, harmony, or law; a maelstrom of independent forces and separate beings which, although fortuitously related, come to be organized into a world of increasing, although never completed, harmony and coherence. This is the idea which James set forth again a few months before his death in connection with the disconcerting psychic phenomena produced by mediums such as the celebrated Eusapia Palladino:

[1] See Bergson's *L'Evolution créatrice* (Paris, 1907), *passim*: "*La vie, depuis ses origines, est la continuation* d'un seul et même *élan qui s'est partagé entre des lignes d'évolution divergentes. . . . L'élan originel est un élan* commun; *plus on remonte haut, plus les tendances diverses apparaissent comme,* complémentaires *les unes des autres. . . . L'harmonie ou plutôt la complémentarité tiennent à une* identité *d'impulsion.*" The expressions I have omitted to italicize clearly betray the monism which seems to me to be the foundation of Bergson's thought, in spite of the indeterminism which it seeks to introduce into cosmic evolution.

"If, . . .," said he,[1] "one takes the theory of evolution radically, one ought to apply it not only to the rock-strata, the animals and the plants, but to the stars, to the chemical elements, and to the laws of nature. There must have been a far-off antiquity, one is then tempted to suppose, when things were really chaotic. Little by little, out of all the haphazard possibilities of that time, a few connected things and habits arose, and the rudiments of regular performance began. Every variation in the way of law and order added itself to this nucleus, which inevitably grew more considerable as history went on; while

[1] W. James: "Final Impressions of a Psychical Researcher," in *Memories and Studies*. New York, 1911, pp. 192-193. We know that James for twenty-five years took an active interest in what is to-day called psychical research. To him is due the discovery and the first study of the celebrated Boston medium, Mrs. Piper. Spiritualists often cite James among their authorities, although unjustifiably, since he never adhered to their doctrines. He simply entered his protest against those who deny *a priori* the existence of these strange phenomena. He believed in opening wide the door to all hypotheses, spiritist and other, while waiting for future researches to throw light on a class of facts from which we can at present conclude nothing with certainty, unless it be that our universe is infinitely more complex and rich in unexplored regions than is suspected by the so-called scientific philosophy of our day.

the aberrant and inconsistent variations, not being similarly preserved, disappeared from being, wandered off as unrelated vagrants, or else remained so imperfectly connected with the part of the world that had grown regular as only to manifest their existence by occasional lawless intrusions, like those which "psychic" phenomena now make into our scientifically organized world. On such a view, these phenomena ought to remain "pure bosh" forever, that is, they ought to be forever intractable to intellectual methods, because they should not yet be organized enough in themselves to follow any laws. . . ."

Doubtless too much importance should not be attached to this cosmogony which James sketches in passing, apropos of these special phenomena. This sketch shows us, however, the manner in which, in his estimation, reality unfolds: it passes from a primordial pluralistic chaos toward an ever-growing state of union and harmony; which is just the reverse of the Bergsonian universe. The latter starting from an original harmonious unity, moves on along diverging lines of evolution toward an ever-increasing dispersion, like the spray from a jet of

water, to use the French philosopher's favorite comparison. It would be difficult to imagine, then, two visions of the course of things more opposed than those of James and Bergson,—with the exception of their common conviction (important, it is true, from the point of view of method) that the reality of this "becoming," this unceasing creation of the new, is inconceivable by our logical thought and must be apprehended directly from immediate experience.

I would add that in these same "Impressions" of a psychical researcher which I have just cited, another widespread mediumistic phenomenon—automatic writing and automatic rapping—leads James to a very different theory from the preceding, namely, that of a cosmic reservoir of diffuse consciousness which is eager to manifest itself, and which perhaps connects with the individual subconsciousness of the medium in such a way as to produce the appearance of a parasitic dæmon, which spiritualists take for a spirit of the dead. Although James gives these two theories on successive pages, he does not attempt to connect them, and we have here another example of his typical and splendid indifference to whatever

incoherences or contradictions appeared among theories provisionally suggested by different groups of phenomena. This he preferred to limiting his vision to the more obvious range of easily explained facts. No thinker knew better than James how to guard himself against the false ideal of unity-at-any-cost, which besets philosophers, and so often causes them to distort the actual reality by stretching it on the Procrustean bed of a rigid system. But this absolute respect for concrete experience, changing, overflowing, and never ending, necessarily prevented his settling upon a precise metaphysical doctrine, which once formulated would have been felt by him to be a hindrance to all further movement of thought.

II. If James changed and did not appear to settle definitely the special problems that interest professional philosophers, the case was quite different in all that he called popular philosophy, which was after all, to his pragmatic eyes, the only important one, the one by which we live, and the one which it is the sole business of all other philosophies to support and fortify. Here he never changed, save in details of form and exposition. Here we find him quite the same through

his whole career, from the first article that appeared under his name to the closing pages of his posthumous work.[1] To him we are free beings in spite of the chains of heredity, education, and habit which bind us; the universe of which we are a part, at present a sorry mixture of good and bad, is an unfinished reality in process of creation, to whose destiny we contribute by our voluntary moral and religious attitude; finally, this confident attitude is the only one to which we are truly conformed, because it alone enables us to support the tragedies and appreciate the joys of life.

Such a vision of the world is indeed what one

[1] I refer to an article on "Faith and the Right to Believe," published as an appendix to his posthumous volume, *Some Problems of Philosophy* (New York, 1911, pp. 221-231). Since 1868 James had written numerous review articles, but always anonymously. The first article which appeared under his name is his letter to Renouvier's *Critique Philosophique* (Jan. 24th, 1878), entitled "*Quelques considérations sur la méthode subjective.*" He there establishes, as against Huxley and positivism, the complete logical justification of faith as a means of realizing its object and of shaping the course of events. It is a singular coincidence, and most significant of the constancy of James's moral attitude, that these, his first and last signed works, should have the same essential purport, that is, the affirmation of the right to believe and of the important influence of faith on the destinies of the universe.

might expect of a thoughtful and exquisite nature whose sympathy was evoked by everything that lives, and which at the same time possessed abounding energy and was impatient of all arbitrary restraints, especially those that have been short-sightedly imposed, in the name of science, upon our feelings, activities, and natural faith. The so-called scientific deterministic monism would not suffice for a man like William James, in whom rightness of heart, force of character, and independence of thought were remarkably combined. On the one hand, he felt the need of a community of aspiration with the central force which guides the universe; on the other, he was neither able nor willing to countenance the evil which he found on every hand, and he could not be in sympathy with a universe of which such revolting things are the inseparable features. Hence the pluralistic conception which, although essentially religious, at first astonishes by running counter to traditional prejudices, but which, upon reflection, is found to conform entirely to the most assured data of experience, and to the deepest needs of the human soul.

James's philosophy rests entirely upon his

psychology. Now he was probably the greatest psychologist that has ever lived, and we cannot hope soon to see his equal. Indeed, I might perhaps have done better to take his psychological doctrines for the main subject of our discussion, instead of merely touching upon them here and there in passing. But here the remark must suffice that upon every branch of psychology which he took up, James has left the imprint of his originality and penetration. He transformed psychology by his analyses and theories of the perception of time, space, and reality; of the nature of emotion, the feeling of effort, of attention, volition, instinct, and reason; of the constitution of consciousness with its focus and fringe, and its incessant transformations; and of much else. It is only with the lapse of time that we shall be able to measure the full value and fecundity of his psychological method, and of the position which he took between the old spiritualistic rationalism on the one hand, and the associationist and atomistic empiricism on the other.[1]

[1] *Cf., inter alia,* E. Baudin's excellent article on *La Méthode psychologique de W. James* (Preface to William James: *Précis de Psychologie,* translated by Baudin and Berthier).

From the psychological point of view James has not left behind him as yet a "school," in the classic sense of the term. Not only are schools no longer characteristic of our epoch, but furthermore James does not offer a system that has the rigid formulæ and the complicated deductive adornments which are required to attract a crowd of awe-struck and disputatious disciples. For his philosophy consists more in an attitude which must be communicated by contact and feeling, rather than through a doctrine which imposes itself by reason of its convenient codification.[1] But, better than having founded a school, William James will remain one of the great prophets of moral and intellectual liberty in the history of thought, an apostle of the intense life and of personal faith, and a liberator from all systems which tend to stifle man's spontaneity

[1] To cite but one example of the elasticity and lack of formulation of James's philosophy, I will recall one critic who enumerated no less than *thirteen* pragmatisms. He was aptly answered that there were as many as there were individuals, and that pragmatism was none the worse for that. See A. O. Lovejoy: "The Thirteen Pragmatisms," *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, Vol. V, pp. 1-29 (Jan., 1908); and M. Meyer: "The Exact Number of Pragmatisms," *ibid.*, pp. 321-326 (June, 1908).

and spiritual development. He was one of those rare individuals who succeed in combining the two poles of our nature, the sense of the real and that of the ideal, into a truly organic synthesis.

. . . . . .

You will now understand, gentlemen, that it was not without a feeling of profound sadness that I accepted your request to take the place, this year at Sainte-Croix, of that incomparable lecturer, that man of genius and great-hearted friend who a few months ago, while still underestimating the gravity of his illness, had so generously agreed to take part at your reunion. It is the irony of fate that I should find myself in the chair which he was to have occupied to-day. And it must be a sad disappointment for you to be hearing William James merely talked about, instead of actually seeing, hearing, and discussing freely with the man himself. Of course, we do not know what special theme he would have chosen for this address, but I can conjecture something of the drift of his discourse, and I well know that you would have derived from it the largest inspiration to independence of thought, and to courage and confidence in the future.

My young friends, he might possibly have said to you, you are at the age of grave doubts and of solemn decisions, when habits are formed for life and when the irrevocable choice is made between the manifold possibilities which our complex natures put before us. Already you have had to choose your careers. Whatever they are, remember that nothing is attained without perseverance and effort, but that, on the other hand, impetuousness and anxiety in no wise hasten the harvest. Silently, day and night, the thoughts that are committed to our nervous mechanism, like seeds, mature and ripen. Provided, then, that you are careful not to sow bad seed, and that you are faithful to your daily task, you may confidently let the rest take care of itself: some fine morning you will awake to the full mastery of your science or your art, to the possession of a competent understanding of your field and, in so far as it depends upon you, your success will be assured. Be of good courage, then, and do not fear life!

But material success is not everything, and besides, times of discouragement will come. In order to live and to grow, a man has need of a

horizon larger than his own profession. Strive then to avoid narrowness, that deformity of the professional man; keep your interest in everything human and keep your sympathy for all noble causes, and above all for that preëminent cause which is concerned with the welfare of the universe itself,—I mean religion. And do not forget that the religious life is too complex and inexhaustible to be imprisoned in formulas, it stretches beyond us on all sides, and each one of us can attain to but a small portion of it. Consequently, be as respectful to the beliefs of others as you are jealous of your own freedom of thought. In religious faith, as everywhere else, one must be oneself, at once sincere and independent, modest yet intrepid.

Nor is any one asked to believe more than he is able. If you are one of those favored persons who have felt the presence of God, treasure this priceless experience; but do not imagine that God cannot reveal Himself to others in a different fashion. If mystical experiences and religious emotions have been denied you, do not for that reason conclude that you and God are not to work together. He needs each one of us to coöp-

erate for the ultimate triumph of good, and for the welfare of the world. It is not our susceptibility to the "religious experience" (which depends in no way on our own choice), but it is our attitude of will (the most intimate and personal part of ourselves), our construing in a moral sense the duties and sacrifices which life imposes, which constitutes our most genuine means of communication with the spiritual essence of things, and our surest means of alliance with the divine will. If we listen for the promptings of conscience, if we follow our ideal intuitions, our course will become ever clearer to us, our strength will increase, and we shall end by feeling the divine realities themselves and finding ourselves numbered among the heroes who may be obscure, yet with whom the universe has to reckon, and who are the lords and masters of life.

Of course there will be along this path of moral development many a setback and defeat. And in view of these tragic possibilities you should know in advance two facts.

First, that it is a somber yet instructive thing to become acquainted with those abysses of anguish and despair in which so many have foun-

dered, and where so many young lives have ended in madness or suicide. No man would court such experiences, and yet those who have been through them and come out safely have penetrated depths of reality of which light and superficial minds have no conception; those alone know the true meaning of the solemn words, damnation, and redemption. Those alone can sympathize with other unfortunate human beings who have drunk of this same cup.

And second, "just as our courage is so often a reflex of another's courage, so our faith is apt to be a faith in some one else's faith. We draw new life from the heroic example. The prophet has drunk more deeply than any one of the cup of bitterness, but his countenance is so unshaken and he speaks such mighty words of cheer that his will becomes our will, and our life is kindled at his own." [1]

[1] William James: *Psychology* (Briefer Course). New York, 1892, pp. 459-460.

APPENDIX

THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.[1]

The lamented Léon Marillier (who died in 1901) wrote, a few years ago, in the *Revue Philosophique*, a very detailed analysis of the psychology of William James.[2] To-day he would have had to add an important chapter upon the further contributions of the great American thinker in a comparatively new field. Marillier, with his profound knowledge of religious manifestations, would have been best qualified to appreciate and to praise James's new book. He would have rejoiced to see this essential aspect of human experience emerge from the conspiracy of silence so long maintained by most modern

[1] William James: "The Varieties of Religious Experience." New York, 1902. This review appeared in the *Revue Philosophique*, Vol. LIV, pp. 516-527 (November, 1902).

[2] Vol. XXXIV, 1892, pp. 449-470 and 603-627, and Vol. XXXV, 1893, pp. 1-32 and 145-183.

psychologists, through the appearance of a masterly work in which it at last receives the consideration it deserves.

. . . . . .

This volume contains the two courses of Gifford Lectures which the author was invited to deliver on Natural Religion at Edinburgh, in 1901 and 1902.

James's intention, we learn from the preface, was to devote the first course to the strictly psychological study of "Man's Religious Appetites" and the second to the metaphysical question of "Their Satisfaction Through Philosophy." But the unexpected growth of the psychological matter, as he came to write it out, resulted in the second subject being postponed almost entirely. In the last lecture of all he suggested briefly his own philosophical conclusions, and hoped to be able, at some later day, to put them in more amplified form.

It must not be inferred that the contents of the actual work are confined to a dry description or classification of facts, addressed only to specialists. For James is at all times both a keen psychologist and an extraordinarily original phi-

losopher, and this fact, together with a delightful style, gives an absorbing interest to everything that comes from his pen. In this and other respects the book is a more than worthy successor to his earlier works. And no one who is interested in the phenomena of religion can read it without being on every page deeply sensible of the rare temper of the author's mind. James's philosophical originality lies not so much in the principles which he expounds, which are those of the most pronounced empiricism, as in his manner of applying them, and of following them up with a fidelity, a detachment from prejudice and an audacity which lead him into regions that are never reached by the vulgar practitioners of experimental philosophy, who are always prone, in spite of their noisy declaration of impartiality, to fall back into the old pedantic ruts.

This independence of spirit appears from the very first chapter entitled "Religion and Neurology," in which James takes the bull by the horns and delivers a penetrating and in places a justly severe criticism of what he calls "medical materialism." This last is the view, much in vogue at present, that religion is irretrievably compro-

mised by the mere fact that those whose experiences in this realm have been at all pronounced (that is to say "religious geniuses," the saints, prophets, mystics, and other humble souls possessed of a really personal and living faith) have generally exhibited symptoms of nervous instability, peculiarities of conduct, hallucinations, etc. They have been, in a word, eccentrics or psychopaths, from which fact it has been inferred that the religious phenomenon is nothing but a nervous disease which is of interest pathologically, but of no value in itself, and the very opposite of that great human ideal for which it has been taken.

James is so far from contesting the frequent combination of the religious genius and the psychopathic temperament, that he looks upon it rather as something quite natural and explicable. But he holds that to discredit the first by reason of the second is to confuse two entirely different questions, namely, the estimation of the *value* of things with the determination of their *origin* or cause. To make the origin the criterion of value has always been, it is true, a method dear to those prejudiced persons who take their ideas

simply and solely from some authoritative source, ecclesiastical or traditional, without inquiring into either their content or their necessary consequences. But we have passed that stage, and the medical materialists are merely belated dogmatists, secularized theologues, when to-day they condemn certain phenomena of conscience and certain beliefs, on account of their morbid origin. To do this is not an empirical procedure. In science or politics we do not estimate a new idea or theory by the state of health of its author, but solely by its intrinsic value. We examine it for its direct utility and for its important implications. We ought to do the same in religion. The only criteria for a philosopher to employ in his criticism of religion are the wholly empirical criteria of its internal value, firstly, for the man who possesses it (his immediate happiness, the illumination it sheds upon his inner life), and secondly, of its tangible effects on individual conduct and collective progress.

It is only in a later chapter (that upon the "Value of Saintliness") that James enters into this appreciation of religion from the purely empirical point of view of its fruits. Before doing

and finally transforms it through the dramatic process of conversion. This is the "twice-born" type.

We cannot think of recapitulating here the six or seven lectures devoted to these subjects, nor indeed those on "The Reality of the Unseen," on "Saintliness," or "Mysticism." All these essentially descriptive chapters abound with concrete facts and striking quotations from typical cases. These James has drawn from the most remarkable autobiographies in literature, and from documents (such as those of Starbuck) that have been furnished by recent investigations. One does not know whether to praise the author more for the richness and extent of his information or for the admirable openness of mind and heart which enables him to understand, to appreciate, and indeed to love the many diverse manifestations of the religious life, so long as they are genuine.

James is free from any form of narrowness, as much from that which afflicts many so-called enlightened and scientific minds as from that of bigoted fanatics. And this breadth does not proceed from any remoteness or indifference on his

part, for clearly he feels that the soil turned up by him is sacred ground, and that there is no event in which a human being is more personally involved, or more directly and immediately revealed, than in the religious experience. This same lively sympathy which enables him to enter so intimately into the souls of those whom he studies is exhibited in many of James's previous essays. For he always deplored the appalling lack of comprehension which the slightest temperamental or intellectual differences commonly suffice to put between beings who are, after all, of one mold.[1]

. . . . . .

From the description of religious experience, one is inevitably led to its appraisal; to the problem of the value and significance of religion, whether from the empirical and biological or from the metaphysical and absolute point of view. We have already said that from the outset James's critical empiricism discarded, as methodologically unjustifiable, the estimates offered by medi-

[1] *Cf.*, the last two essays in *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals.* New York, 1899.

forms a part of a more spiritual universe and derives its deepest significance therefrom, and that our real duty is to adjust ourselves to this higher universe; and further, that prayerful communion is a real means to that end, a truly efficacious act by which the spiritual energy of this other universe is brought to bear in our phenomenal world. But what are such beliefs worth? Are they anything but a subjective impression, a pure illusion? Do they correspond to an objective reality?

The affirmative response to this question has always been along one of two different lines—mysticism or rationalism. The first involves the religious experience as personally lived and attested, and this habitually brings conviction to the individual who practises it, making him invulnerable to all the attacks of skepticism. But it carries no weight with the individual who has not been privileged to have this personal experience. The second line, that of intellectual reasoning, has been followed by theologians and idealistic philosophers of every shade, and like all intellectual processes, it would have the inestimable advantage of giving universally valid re-

sults,—if only it were successful! But no heavy artillery of Kantian dialectic is needed to demolish the beautiful rationalist demonstrations of religious truths, as say, the existence of God. One has only to look about one or to take a glance at history to see that the rational arguments of the ablest theologies and philosophies have never convinced anybody, and have appealed only to those who were already convinced by personal mystical experience. One must accordingly acknowledge the plain fact that there is no means of establishing rationally the objective validity of religious experience and its accompanying beliefs: but neither is there any means of refuting them, or of proving that mystical phenomena do not put the individual in contact with a higher reality.

Does this mean, then, that the understanding has no further place in this domain, and that thinking will not assist in solving religious problems? Certainly not, says James, but one must assign this work of the intellect to its proper place which is only secondary, being a subsequent reflection upon the immediate data of experience. Religious philosophy must start from religious

aggregate of sensations, a bubble of air, as it were, rising to burst at the surface of the cosmic whirlpool. And it is easy to perceive that from this point of view religion can be nothing but an anachronism, a survival of the animistic thought of the ignorant savage who personalizes everything. James recognized that, at first glance, there is a certain appearance of grandeur and magnanimity in this impersonalism of the scientific attitude; but he soon dispels this mirage with a single penetrating observation,—that the general ideas and cosmic conceptions upon which science rests are (as science herself admits) but pictures and *symbols* of reality, whereas the concrete events and personal facts which make us what we are, are *realities* in the proper and most complete sense of the term. In considering "objects," apart from the individual consciousness which thinks them, science makes use of an artifice which may for science have its special and momentary utility, but which none the less destroys that concrete and living status which is their only *real* one. "A conscious field *plus* its object as felt or thought of *plus* an attitude toward the object *plus* the sense of a self to whom

the attitude belongs" constitutes, at least while it lasts, a solid piece of reality, an authentic fragment of what *is*.

It is only from this sort of fragment, that is to say from personal states of consciousness, that we can form a conception as to what the elements of *all* real existence are. To imagine, as do the adepts of modern "science," that we have reality in the general laws and impersonal formulæ of cosmic evolution, is like thinking that the photograph of an express train contains the energy and speed of the train, or like being content, in place of dinner, with the reading of a bill of fare. Religion itself is deceived in no such manner; it presents us with what are but crumbs, perhaps, in the shape of our poor little personal experiences, but they are at least real crumbs, the beginnings of a real repast, a substantial fragment of being. That is why it is not deserting experience, but is on the contrary rather holding to it, to prefer in philosophy religious personalism to scientific impersonalism. It is needless to say that what James is condemning is not the exact sciences, nor the true scientific spirit, but the so-called philosophy of

It is to the development of such an hypothesis and to a sketch of his own "over-beliefs" that James devotes the concluding, and certainly very absorbing, pages of the book.

His hypothesis,—which has met with wide acceptance,—consists in introducing the subliminal or subconscious self as an intermediary between the ordinary personality and the hidden spiritual world, in order to explain all the typical phenomena of the religious experience, and in particular the sentiment of that *more* which is continuous with and at the same time transcends the conscious self. This secures a reconciliation between psychology, which now accepts the subliminal consciousness as a fact, and religion, which is left free to believe that the subliminal sphere is in its turn in touch with higher realities. These latter transmit their influences, more or less modified, through the subconscious to the conscious self. To put it differently: on the one hand, religious phenomena square with psychology under the rubric of automatisms or manifestations of the subconsciousness, and on the other hand, it remains "*literally and objectively true as far as it goes*" that "*the conscious per-*

son is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come" (p. 515). For the rest, since we are entirely ignorant of how far the subconscious self extends on the other side, or what its limits are, it is here that the individual over-beliefs come in to complete one's picture of this *more*.

Let us consider briefly some of our author's own "over-beliefs."

. . . . . .

According to James, our being extends to an entirely different sphere or dimension of existence from this world of the senses, but one that is no less real, since it can exercise an influence upon the latter; in fact, when, through a state of faith or prayer, we enter into communion with this mystical or supernatural sphere (it little matters what name we give it), an actual change is effected in our finite personality, we are transformed into new men and our regeneration, translated into conduct, produces practical consequences in the natural world. If we call this higher active reality God, we may say that God and we have business together, and that by yielding ourselves to His influence we attain our

tor, and soul of the world. Neither does James commit himself in regard to personal immortality,[1] divided as he is between two tendencies which he finds equally vague and equally commendable, namely, the disinterestedness which consents confidently to entrust to others the completion of our cherished ideals, and on the other hand the natural and lively desire to be present in person at their definitive triumph. He sees no objection to the possibility that in the end certain parts of the universe should be lost or eliminated, and that the final harmonization should be realized only at the price of certain absolute sacrifices. This seems to be the only entirely practical solution that James finds for the problem of evil (a problem, however, which he does not treat in detail), for he makes clear that all the optimistic explanations of it and all the at-

[1] Without affirming the *reality* of a future life—which he considered to be a question of fact which psychical research (phenomena of mediums, etc.) might some day clear up—James never ceased to defend *its possibility* against all who claimed in the name of science or philosophy to deny it. See, especially, the little volume in which he refutes the so-called objections drawn from cerebral physiology and other arguments: W. James: *Human Immortality.* (Ingersoll Lecture) Boston, 1898.

tempts at theodicy impress him as very insipid performances. Evil is to him a reality, an element of the universe, which cannot be suppressed by shutting one's eyes to it, or by calling it a "lesser good."

. . . . . .

James's religious philosophy is characterized on the whole, as to method, by two intimately connected traits. First, it is empirical and always eager to take account of actually experienced facts, whatever they may be; for reality is far too rich and complex to be comprehended by a single individual, so that we can never expect every one to have the same religious experience or the same faith; and such diversity must be respected. And second, his philosophy is practical, that is to say, utilitarian, and rejects as vain all speculation that has no bearing on life. James formulated this second point in the principle of "pragmatism," which he adopted from his compatriot, too little known in Europe, the philosopher Peirce; it maintains that all belief is but a rule for action, and that its significance is consequently measured by the difference it can make in our conduct. This does away, at one

whose pretense of being the guardians of truth James does not hesitate to stigmatize as humbug and bosh.

This spectacle, of a psychologist of the first rank, at once a logician and philosopher and entirely abreast of the modern scientific movement, who is independent, moreover, of any dogmatic attachments, and who applies the empirical method exclusively and conscientiously,—rehabilitating the cardinal points of natural religion and of "primitive thought";—this unusual spectacle will undoubtedly scandalize the loyal disciples of Haeckel, Spencer, and the other leaders of "modern thought." They may be counted on to oppose him vigorously. On the other hand, we venture to predict that he will encourage and inspire a host of open-minded contemporaries, who, from a false notion of what the scientific temper is, and despite their own inner promptings, have too long let themselves be silenced by the edicts of monistic and deterministic naturalism.

INDEX

Absolute, the, 33, 84, 87, 92, 101, 126-7, 140-1, 144-6, 238.
Abstractions, 20-1, 24-9, 157-8.
Agassiz, Louis, 16-24.
Annihilation, 132.
Art *versus* science, 3-5.
Bergson, Henri, 108, 198-203, 205-6.
Block-universe, 34, 111, 238.
Boutroux, Emile, 150.
Chance, see Tychism.
Christianity, 16, 149, 163-5.
Consciousness, stream of, 4, 72-4.
Cosmic consciousness, 206, 236-7.
Co-terminousness of minds, 107-9.
Determinism, 32-7 (see also Monism).
Dewey, John, 55-6.
Ego, unity of, 70-1, 74, 104-6.
Empiricism, 3-12, 19-21, 23-5, 44-5, 90, 191-2, 231, 241.
Error, 169-70.
Evil, reality of, 15, 121-2, 144-6, 209, 240-1.
Experience, 6, 9, 27-8, 42, 68-9, 76, 86, 89-98, 118, 232-3.
Faith, 171-6, 180-5, 208, 216, 230.
Fechner, G. T., 160, 198.
Flux of reality, 98-9, 110-1, 203, 206.
Freedom of the will, 113-20, 124, 172, 243.
God, 15, 136-43, 146-8, 151-3, 156-65, 194, 237, 239.
Heroism, 128-32, 177.
Immortality, 240.
James, Henry, 13-4.
Medical materialism, 219-21, 225.
Meliorism, 48, 121-33, 165, 203-6, 208.
Monism, deterministic, 31-43, 101-4, 111-7.
Moralism, see Meliorism.
Over-beliefs, 156, 176, 236-7, 244.
Panpsychism, 95.
Pantheism, 139-44.
Peirce, Charles S., 60-1, 199-200, 241.
Philosophy, 23, 59, 166, 190.
Pluralism, 100-9, 124, 196.
Polytheism, 160-2.
Pragmatism, 28-30, 42, 44-67, 136, 211, 241-3.
Progress, see Meliorism.
Psychology, 5, 210, 217.
Radical empiricism, 29, 68-99, 190.
Rationalism, 68-9, 75, 87-9, 168-9, 197.
Reality, see Experience.
Religion, 11, 134, 161-2, 174-6, 182, 185-8, 222-3, 229-30.
Religious experience, 149-55, 161-2, 178, 223-4, 234-5.

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